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Security Council

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New York

President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Iliichev	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Ms. King
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Carrera Castro
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	Togo	Mr. Salifou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2013/139)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2013/139)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Brazil, Canada, Chile, Haiti, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Spain and Uruguay to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the presence at the Council table of His Excellency Mr. Fernando Carrera Castro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nigel Fisher, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Interim Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/139, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Fisher: I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide the Security Council with an update on the most recent developments in Haiti and to join this discussion of the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The annex to the report of the Secretary-General before the Council (S/2013/139) outlines the MINUSTAH consolidation plan, as agreed with the Government of Haiti. The plan outlines key objectives for the next three years to strengthen security, the rule of law, elections administration and institutional modernization, which, if achieved, will enable MINUSTAH to continue the process of consolidation on which it has already embarked.

As outlined by the Secretary-General in his report, the period under review has been a challenging one for Haiti, both at the political level and for the people of Haiti. The annual economic growth rate fell well below forecast levels. High unemployment rates were compounded by two severe tropical storms and regional droughts that exacerbated the high levels of food insecurity facing many households. Agricultural production was particularly hard-hit.

The Government responded promptly by establishing a state of emergency to accelerate the disbursement of funds to address emergency needs. A modest emergency appeal was launched with the support of the United Nations and other partners, to which the response was encouraging. In addition, the Government announced agricultural production and environmental protection as national priorities for 2013.

Progress continues in finding alternative solutions for displaced Haitians remaining in camps. Displacement numbers continue to decline, although conditions for residual camp populations worsen as humanitarian resources shrink and international operational partners end operations.

The cholera epidemic continues. Fatality and infection rates are much reduced from peak rates, although a recent spike in outbreaks gives cause for concern. The Government has launched the national eradication plan, supported by the Secretary-General's initiative, but significant additional financing is required.

The Government also continued to deploy efforts to attract investors and to stimulate economic growth and job creation. Most recently, a new initiative was launched to significantly reduce the time required to register new businesses.

The security situation, in overall terms, remained relatively stable. Nevertheless, difficult socioeconomic conditions contributed to an increase in public protests. The number of kidnappings declined, but homicide rates increased, in particular driven by inter-gang violence in parts of Port-au-Prince.

As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the period under review was one of impasse in the political domain, epitomized by the lack of progress

in creating the electoral commission that would oversee partial legislative and local elections, which are now 16 months overdue. Despite the 24 December agreement brokered by the religious coalition Religions pour la Paix, and subsequent intense debate, significant differences remain among the executive and legislative levels and the high judicial council.

It is worthwhile recalling the reason that elections are now so crucial in Haiti. At the local level, the municipal and local elections were to have been held in November 2011. In the absence of those elections, over the past year we have seen the replacement of some 130 elected municipal Governments with presidential appointees.

At the legislative level, the mandate of one third of Haiti's Senators expired in May of last year, considerably impairing the functioning of that body. The issue of whether the mandates of an additional third of the Senators expire in early 2014 or in early 2015 remains acrimonious and unresolved.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The holding of credible elections in 2013 is crucial, making it possible to bolster Haiti's democratic institutions, strengthen the rule of law and respond to the urgent needs of Haitian citizens in crucial areas including social protection and employment.

Yesterday, through one of his advisers, the President committed to establishing a temporary electoral council before Easter. However, establishment of the electoral council will constitute only a first step towards holding credible and inclusive elections.

MINUSTAH, like all of Haiti's partners on the ground, is urging all political actors to unite in a spirit of strengthened collaboration to achieve an agreement on a minimum set of necessary measures to ensure the holding of elections before the end of the year. That would include an agreement on the type and date of the elections, clarification on the deadline for senatorial terms, the adoption of an electoral law and a law on political parties and their financing, as well as an agreement on the modus operandi of the electoral council.

(*spoke in English*)

Progress on elections has become the barometer for measuring progress towards a more inclusive political culture and for addressing institutional and development challenges. But Haiti faces many challenges beyond the electoral process alone. Recognizing the interdependence of security, stability and development, the Government of Haiti and MINUSTAH have agreed upon a conditions-based consolidation plan for MINUSTAH, which is annexed to the Secretary-General's report.

The consolidation plan sets out four core-mandated tasks to be achieved with the Government and, of course, in collaboration with other national and international partners. Those are, first, the accelerated development of the Haitian National Police; secondly, the strengthening of a permanent electoral commission once it is created; thirdly, strengthening of the rule of law and respect for human rights, with a priority on reinforcing basic accountability and oversight mechanisms; and, fourthly, supporting key national and local governance reforms, as well as helping key national stakeholders to achieve consensus on inclusive political processes and institutional reforms — all as necessary conditions for socioeconomic development, which will benefit the majority of Haitian citizens.

For each of the four areas, the plan sets out a limited number of benchmarks that could realistically be attained by 2016. The plan is of course subject to a number of conditions, including a graduated transfer to Haitian authorities of responsibility for maintaining security, as well as increased independence of the judiciary.

On the issue of good governance, I am encouraged by the recent steps taken by the Prime Minister to fight corruption. The early passage of anti-corruption, procurement and tendering procedure laws that is now before parliament would also strengthen due process and encourage investment.

Finally, the consolidation plan foresees the further reduction of MINUSTAH's uniformed strength, as part of MINUSTAH's overall consolidation, within a progressively smaller and less costly Mission footprint in Haiti.

At the start of my presentation, I mentioned the ongoing cholera epidemic and the recent spike in cases. I also mentioned the recently launched national cholera elimination plan, supported by the Secretary-General's initiative announced in December. We in the United Nations family are committed to continued support for the national plan and, with partners, to redouble efforts to mobilize the significant additional resources needed

to fight cholera, to improve water and sanitation and to strengthen the national health-care network. Haitians expect no less.

MINUSTAH's leadership is also committed to ensuring that the United Nations policy of zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse by our personnel is respected and enforced. It is essential to our reputation that the conduct of our personnel be in conformity with the highest standards and that prompt and decisive action be taken to prevent abuse, to investigate allegations and to impose disciplinary measures where warranted.

(*spoke in French*)

The stabilization process in Haiti has encountered a number of difficulties during the time period under consideration. However, I remain convinced that Haiti can and will make great progress in overcoming political divisions by undertaking necessary and important reforms in the institutional arena, as well as in the area of the rule of law, and to meet the urgent economic and social needs of its citizens.

Moving beyond the current political impasse is crucial to consolidating democracy in Haiti. MINUSTAH — the consolidation plan of which was approved by the Haitian Government — is prepared to support Haiti in assuming increasing responsibility for its national security and the security of its citizens, and to assist in creating consensus on an inclusive, democratic process and institutional reforms and a conducive environment for economic development and the well-being of the majority of Haitians.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Fisher for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Interim Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Mr. Fisher, for his briefing, and Ambassador Gaspar of Haiti for joining us today. We value his engagement and partnership.

Last October (see S/PV.6842), we gathered in this Chamber with relative optimism about the great strides being made by the Haitian people in rebuilding their country, including the appointment of a new Prime Minister, the increased roles for women, and constitutional amendments to strengthen the rule of law and democracy, to name but a few. Today, Acting Special Representative Fisher has shared the Secretary-General's observations that Haiti has missed an opportunity to achieve meaningful progress over the past six months. His candid findings remind us all of the hard work that remains to be done.

As the Council noted in January, holding free, fair, inclusive and credible local, municipal and senatorial elections by the end of 2013 is critical. The absence of such elections impedes stability and socioeconomic development. The Haitian Parliament's designation of its three representatives to the transitional permanent electoral council last week is an important step forward, and we hope that it will be followed swiftly with the actions necessary to schedule overdue elections. Progress on that front will reassure the international community and the Haitian people of the Government's commitment to democracy, transparency and good governance. Attention can then turn in earnest to creating jobs, fighting food insecurity and preparing for the next natural disaster.

Another area of concern is security. Without question, the capacity and sustainability of the Haitian National Police (HNP) should be the single highest priority for MINUSTAH. The ability to transfer full security responsibility is a precondition for further reductions in MINUSTAH forces and its eventual withdrawal. We are encouraged by the robust partnership between MINUSTAH and the HNP, and support efforts on that critical priority.

Turning to reconstruction, we are encouraged by the progress made since the 2010 earthquake. In particular we note that the total number of displaced persons who have sought shelter in camps has fallen to 357,000. We expect MINUSTAH to continue working with the Government of Haiti and international partners to find durable solutions for the sheltering and protection of those vulnerable individuals that remain in the camps.

With regard to efforts to eradicate cholera, we commend the Secretary-General for his personal commitment to the issue and support the appointment of Mr. Paul Farmer as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for Community-based Medicine and Lessons from Haiti.

The United States welcomes the Secretary-General's conditions-based consolidation plan 2013-2016 (see S/2013/139, annex) and its focus on a core set of

mandated tasks to be executed in partnership with the United Nations country team, international partners and, most importantly, the Government of Haiti. The plan is a living document that will evolve in response to developments on the ground, as well adjustments to the MINUSTAH mandate. We look forward to working with Council members to refine the plan in the coming months.

Finally, I would like to underscore our appreciation and support for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Every day, those serving in MINUSTAH are working side by side with the Haitian people and Government to strengthen the country's institutions, provide security, protect human rights and tackle challenges, such as forced evictions and sexual and gender-based violence. MINUSTAH carries a heavy responsibility, and we are grateful for the Mission's tireless work.

We nevertheless insist that any instance of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel is unacceptable. We expect sustained actions by MINUSTAH's leadership to ensure that such abuses will not be tolerated.

We cannot let setbacks cause us to lose sight of the most important objective — to achieve a self-sustaining, stable and secure nation in which all of its citizens have democratic freedoms, the protection of human rights and the assurance of food, shelter and basic services. Serious problems persist, but Haiti is gradually moving forward with the help of MINUSTAH, international partners and the hard work and determination of the Haitian people. The United States remains firmly committed to helping Haiti build a brighter future and reach its full potential.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate. We thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, for his insightful briefing.

Pakistan fully supports efforts to move Haiti towards peace and progress, which is the collective objective of the Haitian people, the Council and the international community. The brave and resilient people of Haiti have made important strides towards stability and development. The devastating earthquake of 2010 reversed the gains achieved over many years. It is heartening that a new and promising Haiti is emerging from the ashes of that tragedy. Challenges persist, but the resolve of the Haitian people to take collective action to rebuild their country is stronger.

Last year, Haiti achieved important political milestones by forming a new Government, issuing constitutional amendments and establishing a Superior Council of the Judiciary. This year, elections of Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies are significant developments. Improvement in relations between the executive and the Parliament will lead to further political progress in the country.

We welcome the pledge made by the President of Haiti to hold elections in 2013. The elections will help revitalize the country's democratic institutions. Haiti needs international assistance in managing the electoral process. We support assistance by the United Nations for the Haitian authorities to progressively assume full responsibility for the management of the electoral process by 2016.

Pakistan has been a participant in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Haiti since 1993. At present, one formed police unit from Pakistan comprising 139 personnel is serving in Haiti. All components of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) are implementing a challenging mandate under difficult circumstances. We hope that the drawdown of the MINUSTAH military component will not impact the security situation in that country. Disturbances in some areas of the country underscore the necessity for the Mission to remain agile and capable against an emergent situation.

The Secretary-General's report under consideration today (S/2013/139) has presented a condition-based consolidation plan for MINUSTAH. It entails a narrowing of MINUSTAH activities to core mandated tasks in the areas of security, governance, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. We agree with the approach of working around a set of stabilization benchmarks to gauge the overall progress. One of the most significant aspects of the benchmarks is the development of the Haitian National Police (HNP). The success of the five-year training programme and the strengthening of the HNP is a prerequisite for MINUSTAH's eventual withdrawal from Haiti.

Today's debate should underscore the challenge of addressing the humanitarian situation in Haiti. The ongoing cholera epidemic, food insecurity and extreme vulnerability to natural disasters augment the humanitarian challenge. We urge greater coordination

and cohesion among different actors engaged in humanitarian work. We also caution against donor fatigue, which can result from a protracted crisis such as that faced by Haiti.

Pakistan supports the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Haiti. We remain a sincere partner of the people of Haiti in their quest for peace, security, stability and progress.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by welcoming the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, and thanking him for his informative briefing and presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/139). At a time when we are focusing on his work at the helm of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), we also hope to see the appointment of a new Special Representative who can continue working with the Haitian Government to coordinate the ongoing efforts to establish security, ensure peace, restore justice and respect for human rights, and achieve sustainable development in this beloved country. It would be an honour for Latin America for that responsibility to go to a representative of the region.

I would also like to emphasize that my delegation fully subscribes to the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

I would like to reaffirm Argentina's firm commitment to Haiti's institutional reconstruction, democratic stability and development. While Argentina has a long tradition of support for Haiti's democratic Governments, 2004 was a turning point. That year, the social, institutional and infrastructure challenges posed by the structural poverty from which the country suffered culminated in the political and institutional crisis resulting from President Aristide's expulsion. That led the international community to launch MINUSTAH — a mission made up entirely, for the first time, by the countries of our region. Argentina contributes 573 military personnel and 14 police officers to the Mission.

Similarly, since the first South-South cooperation activities began at the regional level, aimed at stabilizing Haiti within the framework of MINUSTAH, the countries of the region have put together wide-ranging initiatives in the area of technical cooperation in various fields of activity. Between 2005 and 2012, Argentina, along with other countries of the region and the regional organization the Union of South American Nations, was involved in more than 172 projects promoting the social dimensions of cooperation. The majority of these were aimed at improving food security and access to basic rights in the areas of education, health care, water and sanitation, the political and social arena, housing, and the rights of children, young people and the disabled.

Economic cooperation has also been significant, with projects supporting technology and production, mainly in the agricultural sector, and in strengthening the socioeconomic infrastructure. In the wake of the devastation caused by the 2010 earthquake, South-South cooperation in the region expanded, not only in terms of increased funding for Haiti but also in addressing the coordination challenges posed by the Latin American presence there. Argentina agrees with the Secretary-General when he says in his report that MINUSTAH continues to be a decisive factor in establishing a secure and stable environment in Haiti that is conducive to a definitive momentum towards development. For that reason, we support the Mission's continuing presence on the basis of its mandate from the Security Council, as long as that presence is still desired by the Government of Haiti.

I would like to address some major issues. First, we wish to highlight the efforts of Haitian society and Government in tackling the effects of the 2010 earthquake. That unprecedented disaster added new and unique problems to the country's existing challenges. The earthquake and its human, economic and environmental consequences affected more than 3.5 million people — one third of the population — of whom 222,570 died, 350,000 were injured and 2.3 million were left homeless, including more than 300,000 children and young people, leaving thousands in camps for the internally displaced and massive destruction of administrative, education and health facilities. Since then, Haiti has had to deal with the destructive effects of Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Isaac, which have caused considerable damage to the country, especially in the farming sector, and continue to pose enormous challenges.

Nonetheless, despite these adversities, affirmed by the United Nations Development Programme in its most recent report, Haiti continues to make progress. Some examples of this can be seen in construction; some 80 per cent of the 10 million cubic metres of rubble has been cleared from houses and 20 per cent of it recycled.

In two years, 1 million people have returned to their homes and 400,000 jobs have been created, 40 per cent of them for women. Many students and community leaders have been trained in natural disaster mitigation and reduction activities. Environmental protection efforts have been channeled through programmes, particularly in vulnerable regions, an area in which women continue to play a key role in that they are directly involved in reforestation projects.

However, as the former Head of MINUSTAH, Mr. Mariano Fernández Amunátegui, said in his briefings, democracy and good governance continue to be serious issues in Haiti. The current political situation in Haiti is in the process of being stabilized; while still fragile, it is promising, but it must be strengthened. Political capacity must be strengthened, State institutions rebuilt, socioeconomic development promoted and investment attracted. In that context, holding credible, fair and transparent elections this year, in 2013, is vital to rebuilding State capacity and restoring the rule of law, at the local level as well as nationally.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in standards for protecting the most vulnerable groups, for example through a law to integrate people with disabilities, which has been enacted in Parliament and approved by the President. Draft legislation agreed to by all the political parties aimed at eliminating violence against women is pending before the Government, which has also ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. An inter-ministerial committee on human rights has been created and has presented a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.

However, the Haitian National Police, while gradually continuing to consolidate, does not yet have the capacity to assume full responsibility for providing and ensuring internal security throughout the country. In that context, MINUSTAH, its military and police personnel play a vital role in maintaining security and stability in the country. The United Nations, working with the international community in Haiti, must continue to provide the financial, technical and logistical capacity needed to allow Haiti to make progress towards definitive stabilization. As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported, beyond the progress made in recent years, Haiti continues to grapple with a critical number of needs and with the importance of building State capacity, without which the people's needs cannot be met. To cite only one figure, a seriously important issue is the deterioration in food security, affecting at least 2.1 million people, who will be at genuinely severe nutritional risk if steps are not taken to address the problem in time.

We understand that the time has come to consolidate progress in the area of resettlement. To that end, we believe that the international community must renew its efforts to support the Haitian Government in ensuring decent living conditions for those who are still living in camps and in promoting programmes of return. According to the Secretary-General's report, however, the 2012 consolidated appeal finished the year at 46 per cent of its funding level, with the number of international non-governmental organizations present in Haiti declining by 57 per cent since 2010. Those figures are truly in contradiction with our regional and international responsibility to promote social, economic and institutional development in Haiti.

In recent days, we have heard the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights welcome the initiative in Port-au-Prince to try the ex-dictator of Haiti, Jean-Claude Duvalier. Duvalier, who was also known as "Baby Doc", has been indicted for crimes against humanity, including the murder or exile of more than 30,000 people during his reign. Furthermore, in his report to the Human Rights Council, the Independent Expert Mr. Michel Forst identified, among the factors threatening the establishment of effective democracy in Haiti, political or partisan considerations in appointing magistrates, the weakness of the judiciary and the reign of impunity. In that respect, he reported that prison conditions have not improved and that the treatment of prisoners continues to be inhumane, degrading and cruel. The Expert noted that incidents of police brutality and harassment occur frequently, and he expressed his belief that the impunity of human rights violators indicated a return of fear among the population and that the authorities needed to act decisively to resolve this problem.

Moreover, we are concerned that the financing available for the development of the Haitian National Police remains insufficient. The Police is a key institution for progress in the area of stabilization, as it is responsible for maintaining security. Similarly, it is important to strengthen Haitian institutions with a view to improving the process of formulating policies and

relations between the State and citizens, which have been undermined in recent months.

With regard to the future and the social and political situation in Haiti, we understand the complexity and the difficulty of the issues at hand. We are concerned about the reduction in financing available for humanitarian assistance, because it puts all that has been achieved at risk. However, we also have encouraging news. One million displaced persons were able to leave the camps between 2010 and early 2013, which reflects a general reduction of 77 per cent. According to the report, that reduction can be attributed largely to the return programmes undertaken by the Government with the support of the United Nations. However, it is alarming to note that 84 per cent of the population remaining in the camps are people who were displaced by the earthquake, a great number of whom remain dependent on assistance for basic survival.

We underscore the commitment that should be undertaken by all Haitian political and social actors to a frank dialogue to lay the foundations for an agreement that will allow the transition from transitional to permanent electoral council to be completed and elections to be held this year. In parallel to the agreement on the appointment of members to the legislative and judiciary branches, it is important to designate representatives of the executive branch as soon as possible. The commitment of Haitians to their own legislative mandates can only encourage the international community to continue supporting the strengthening of the country. In that regard, we welcome the Haitian Government's commitment to contributing almost half of its electoral budget and the decision of the United Nations to provide support for the upcoming elections and to help the Haitian authorities over the next three years to progressively assume full responsibility for managing the electoral process in 2016.

We believe that progress in the area of stabilization should be accompanied by growth and development in the country based on priorities set by the Government and people of Haiti. With regard to the Mission's activities, we welcome the presentation of the first draft of MINUSTAH's consolidation plan and the fact that the plan enjoys the support of the Government of Haiti. We understand that the plan must be developed within the framework of the Mission's mandate on the basis of the evolution of conditions on the ground. In that connection, we believe that actions related to governance should contribute to consensus-building without overstepping the functions of Haitian institutions. We hope that the plan will continue to be developed in close coordination with the Government and people of Haiti, pursuant to their own priorities.

I conclude by reaffirming Argentina's unshakeable commitment to the people of Haiti, democracy, human rights and the country's development. That commitment will continue to be manifest within the Security Council, to which Argentina has belonged as a non-permanent member since January 2013. We have been supported by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in promoting the interests of our region. In that context, promoting human rights, democracy and development in Haiti are all priorities.

I would like to honour the work of the peacekeepers in Haiti, and especially the Argentine peacekeepers, whose conduct has been impeccable. We are proud that our country has not received a single complaint of misconduct or the commission of crimes.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2013/139) on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and to the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fisher, for his briefing. I would also like to commend the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the United Nations country team, which continue to play a crucial role in supporting the recovery and stabilization of Haiti.

In resolution 2070 (2012), the Security Council recognized that Haiti had continued to make considerable strides since the tragic earthquake of January 2010 and had achieved over the past year a number of political milestones indicative of progress in the process of stabilization. We note that in the period under review, the overall security situation in the country remained relatively stable, that the performance of the Haitian National Police (HNP) continued to improve and considerable results were achieved in fighting crime. Significant strides were made regarding the resettlement of persons displaced by the 2010 earthquake, and the Government initiated measures to respond to grievances linked to the increased cost of living and food insecurity. We also note the signing of the finalized integrated strategic framework for 2013-2016 between the United Nations and the Government of Haiti, which captures comprehensive shared objectives for the long-term development of Haiti.

At the same time, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, the period under review posed numerous challenges to the stabilization process in Haiti. Indeed, more should be done by the national authorities and the international community in the broad interest of the Haitian people. Needless to say, political stability in the country is a key priority for the stabilization and development of Haiti. The tension in relations between the country's executive branch and Parliament remains one of the major obstacles to greater stability and prosperity. It is therefore important that all political actors in Haiti redouble their efforts to preserve the progress achieved over the past year and take a responsible approach to engaging in constructive dialogue to address their differences in a spirit of compromise. Such dialogue is particularly important for launching the long-overdue electoral process and holding free, fair, inclusive and credible elections as soon as possible.

It is essential that the international community continue to encourage political dialogue among the branches of Government and other key political actors. The United Nations should support the upcoming elections and progressively strengthen the capacity of the Haitian authorities to assume full responsibility for national ownership of the organization and conduct of elections. Further efforts are also needed to strengthen key rule of law institutions, reform the security sector, attract investment, promote sustainable development and advance the democratic agenda.

The protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women, children and internally displaced persons, should remain the priority.

The humanitarian situation in Haiti continues to show signs of improvement as the number of internally displaced persons living in camps declines. However, significant humanitarian challenges remain. Continued strong international engagement and efforts by the Haitian authorities are crucial to ensuring that all pressing humanitarian needs are met. We note in that regard that, in consultation with the Government, the United Nations and the humanitarian actors in the country further developed a humanitarian action plan for 2013, focusing on food insecurity and cholera.

The role of MINUSTAH in the maintenance of overall security and stability remains vital, and the improvement and the performance of national parties is partly attributable to support provided by Mission forces. Close cooperation between the HNP and MINUSTAH is critical to effectively addressing security challenges and to ensuring that the police move forward to reach the capacity necessary to handle its full responsibility for the provision of internal security. The continued assistance of the international community and funding remain critical to supporting professional, reliable and accountable police forces.

In concluding, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for submitting a conditions-based consolidation plan for MINUSTAH in response to the request of the Security Council in its resolution 2070 (2012). We believe that the plan will enable MINUSTAH to operate more efficiently and cost-effectively, that is, to focus on the most critical aspects of stability, a progressive transition of functions to national authorities, and the provision of assistance to international partners.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I would like to join others in thanking Mr. Nigel Fisher for his insightful briefing. I congratulate him for the work he is doing as Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti.

Rwanda commends the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for the role it is playing in assisting Haitians to rebuild their country. We renew our support for its work in various areas, including the maintenance of public order, the promotion of human rights and the strengthening the rule of law.

We fully support the Haitian people on their road to reconstruction, democracy and development. We are convinced that Haitians can overcome the current challenges through the solidarity and active support of the international community. However, political progress requires the Government and all political actors in Haiti to come together and form a broader political pact based on a common set of national priorities, in accordance with the country's Constitution.

The success already achieved in rebuilding the country runs the risk of being eroded by the lack of progress in establishing key Government institutions, especially the Electoral Council. Free, fair and credible elections are paramount if a Government that can answer to the many challenges being faced by Haitians is to be established and if trust in Government institutions is eventually to be restored. It is therefore imperative that all stakeholders within the legislative and executive branches of Government make the necessary concessions to ensure that agreement is reached to establish the

Electoral Council, reinforce good governance and set in motion the reforms needed to rebuild and consolidate stability and encourage outside investment. In that regard, support and assistance from the international community, the United Nations and the international financial institutions remain indispensable and critical to enabling the country to meet the aspirations of its people.

We note that the security situation remains relatively stable and that the number of kidnappings has decreased. However, we express concern over the increase in the number of homicides and continued civil unrest, particularly regular anti-Government demonstrations. As one of the police-contributing countries in MINUSTAH, with a formed police unit of 160 police officers, we recognize the importance of professionalizing the Haitian police force in order to tackle those security challenges. We call upon the international community to continue providing support in that regard.

We emphasize that security must be accompanied by socioeconomic development. Therefore, our collective reflection on Haiti today should take into account the interlinkages between security and development as key components of sustainable peace. It is therefore essential that efforts on the security front be accompanied by even stronger support by the international community to socioeconomic development and the strengthening of institutional capabilities.

Concerning the humanitarian situation, we of course remain concerned by the prevalence of cholera and we commend the Government of Haiti for its national eradication plan against the disease. We are alarmed by the aftermath of the earthquake and the deteriorating food security situation in the country, which has been aggravated by drought, hurricane Sandy and tropical storm Isaac. We take note of the humanitarian action plan for 2013, which requires an estimated $144 million. We call upon the international community to continue to extend solidarity to the Haitian people. Rwanda also expresses concern over the human rights situation in Haiti, particularly with regard to sexual and gender-based violence, and we urge the Government to establish mechanisms that protect women and children against such violence.

In conclusion, the recent report on the current conditions on the ground reflects a country that has made progress (S/2013/139). However, a strong commitment by the Haitian Government and political forces, as well as continued support from the international community, is needed to accompany that progress towards sustainable peace, stability and socioeconomic development for Haiti.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): I thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, for his briefing. We applaud the entire team of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for its valuable contribution towards promoting stability and development in Haiti.

More than three years after the devastating earthquake, Haiti continues to face significant political, economic and other challenges. The hard-won progress in the political arena in past years has been giving way to setbacks and uncertainties. The continued stand-off among political actors and the lack of trust in the rule of law in society are a source of serious concern.

The socioeconomic situation in Haiti also remains fragile, with its food insecurity, cholera epidemic, and weak health-care and humanitarian-relief systems. The social and economic grievances have often led to civil unrest and rising crime, which put a heavy burden on the country's stabilization process. Given the complexity of the challenges Haiti faces, a comprehensive approach still remains important.

On the political front, it is imperative that the long overdue elections be held soon in order to enable the Haitian people to have a credible and broad-based political mechanism at hand. The agreement on the establishment of the transitional college of the Permanent Electoral Council is welcome. However, it is disappointing that the body has yet to materialize. We encourage all the political stakeholders in Haiti to step up their efforts with a view to finalizing the appointment of the members of that electoral body and hold fair and inclusive elections within the earliest possible time frame this year.

The strengthening of the rule of law and the relevant institutions is a prerequisite for the protection and promotion of human rights in the country. We are particularly concerned about the continuing sexual violence against women. Despite the growing awareness of its seriousness, a number of women and girls are still being victimized through such crimes. What is worse is that the victims' acute suffering often goes unreported, while perpetrators are not properly investigated and prosecuted.

The police and judicial response to sexual violence must be strengthened. MINUSTAH needs to further enhance its training programme for the National Police in the field of sexual violence and in respect to broader human rights concerns. Moreover, education and awareness campaigns in society could help break the culture of silence and impunity on the issue.

To ensure better security and a long-term basis for development in Haiti, capacity-building of the police is a vital requirement. Despite the continued improvements in its performance, we note the assessment of the Secretary-General that the current capacity of the National Police is not yet sufficient for it to assume full responsibility for security throughout the country.

As MINUSTAH moves to a more focused and action-oriented phase of its operations, it is noteworthy that the consolidation plan for the Mission identifies the capacity-building of the police as one of its highest priorities. Indeed, the readiness of the National Police to ensure the security of the country will be a precondition for MINUSTAH's eventual withdrawal from Haiti.

We appreciate the role of MINUSTAH in assisting Haiti in the areas of recovery, political stability and development. In that regard, we fully support the ongoing reconfiguration and consolidation process of the Mission. The international community should continue its support for and engagement in Haiti, so that the country can overcome the current challenges facing it and achieve recovery and stabilization in the near future. The Republic of Korea will continue to give its support to the Government and the people of Haiti in their endeavour.

Mr. Carrera Castro (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to join the Council for today's debate. This provides me the first opportunity, since I took office several weeks ago as Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country, to take part in a debate of the Council and thereby renew the political support of my Government for this body.

Moreover, the issue that we have gathered here today to address — the future of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) — holds a special place in our own foreign policy agenda. MINUSTAH is the only peacekeeping operation in our region — Latin America and the Caribbean — and, as a troop-contributing country, we feel a deep sense of connection with the people and the Government of Haiti.

We thank the Russian Federation for having convened this debate, and we commend the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, and all the staff of MINUSTAH for the important work they are doing in Haiti in the face of major challenges. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/139), which informs our debate today.

We have mixed reactions to the content of the report. On the one hand, it reports gradual progress in certain areas and presents us, in the annex, with an encouraging plan for the period 2013-2016. On the other hand, we note with concern the persistent uncertainty surrounding the pending elections, which are 16 months overdue. We note also that there is a lack of political consensus for a national unity dialogue and that, as the report stresses, rule-of-law initiatives have yet to produce significant and sustainable change. For instance, the Haitian National Police is not yet in a position to assume full responsibility for the provision of security throughout the country, and food insecurity poses a serious threat to social stability.

More specifically, we note, first, that the key short-term priority is the holding of local, municipal and legislative elections. Postponing them yet again could jeopardize the Haitian rule of law. That is why we welcomed the Security Council's press statement of 28 January 2013 (SC/10901), and we call once again for the urgent holding of credible, inclusive and transparent elections, in accordance with the Constitution. We note with appreciation the recent designation by the legislative branch of its representatives to the transitional college of the permanent electoral council. We hope that this process will be completed as soon as possible and that, once established, it will show the necessary independence.

Secondly, we support the development of a political agreement, and we are concerned that key decision-making on the issue is being undermined by the lack of consensus at the national level. In Guatemala, our Government has been able to work in an inclusive manner through the identification of shared priorities and by obtaining commitments from major stakeholders for the approval of an agreement for justice and security in Guatemala. My country is prepared to share its experience in that regard with the sisterly Republic of Haiti.

Thirdly, we agree with the Secretary-General that in order to reverse the rising trend of major crime in Haiti, especially those mentioned earlier by the Republic of Korea, including sexual violence against women and children, it is important that the Government continue to strengthen rule-of-law institutions and step up its efforts to combat impunity. The establishment of sound rule-of-law institutions, including the police and the judiciary, requires that they be allowed to operate as independently as possible.

Fourthly, we continue to be concerned about the situation of the more than 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps. We encourage the Government, with the support of the international community, to improve conditions in the remaining IDP camps and to continue advancing with reconstruction efforts.

In addition, I wish to express our full support for the Secretary-General's initiative of 11 December 2012 for the elimination of cholera in Haiti. In that regard, we deem particularly suitable the appointment of Dr. Paul Farmer, as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for Community-based Medicine and Lessons from Haiti. Let me also express our satisfaction at the recent signing of the new integrated strategic framework for the period 2013-2016. In that context, we are concerned that last year's Haiti's flash appeal is still far from meeting its goals.

Turning now to the consolidation plan, we welcome the concise version that we have received, which is still being examined by our national authorities. We note the natural assumption that the Mission marks 2016 as its horizon. While that assumption is a step in the right direction, we believe that the criteria to be taken into account for an exit strategy include the objective conditions that will enable the United Nations to withdraw responsibly from the country. Those conditions for the strategy need to be flexible and adapted to the realities on the ground in Haiti.

In that respect, we would refer to paragraph 17 of the annex to the report of the Secretary-General. We have some doubts about the usefulness of projecting figures involving uniformed personnel, and their budgetary implications, on the basis of hypothetical scenarios. Therefore, we would appreciate more information about the criteria used to propose a 30 per cent drawdown, since the implementation of such a proposal could be premature in relation to the realities on the ground. We make this point because we deem it very important that MINUSTAH be provided with adequate resources to fulfil its mandate.

Likewise, we think that there is a sequence that must be corrected with regard to the mandate of MINUSTAH, since the budget is approved in May and the mandate is renewed in October. A more logical approach would be for the mandate to determine the budget, and not the other way around. With the consolidation plan still under development and as we cannot be certain of electoral logistical requirements, we trust that there will not be any further reductions in the number of uniformed personnel.

Finally, we believe that progress in Haiti will depend on the convergence of several factors: adequate resources; the effective leadership of MINUSTAH; and the political will of Haiti, the country hosting, and benefiting from the support of, the Mission. We deem the latter — the political will and the political efforts of the Haitian Government — the most important.

If the necessary basis for such convergence is lacking, then any involvement of the United Nations will face major obstacles, both in terms of achieving success and of maintaining a secure environment. Guatemala is proud to have been part of MINUSTAH since its inception, and we will continue our commitment to the people and the Government of Haiti as long as necessary.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me also to thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, for his briefing to the Council and for his commitment at the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), whose significant work we commend.

Luxembourg associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

Over the three years since the tragic earthquake of January 2010, Haitians have begun the long and difficult reconstruction of their country with the support of the international community and the United Nations. Significant progress has been made. The number of displaced persons living in camps has decreased by 77 per cent. Rebuilding has moved forward thanks also to the activity of the MINUSTAH military engineering units and the many quick-implementation projects led by the Mission. Thanks to the combined work of MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police,

characterized by greater information-sharing and an increased number of joint operations, the security situation has stabilized. On the political front, the President and the elected Government have been able to take up their functions.

However, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139) notes that, over the past six months, the stabilization process has encountered many difficulties. The country again suffered serious damage in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. The socioeconomic situation continues to be characterized by poverty, which affects three-quarters of the population. The human rights situation leaves much to be desired. Despite the praiseworthy work of the MINUSTAH child protection team, many forms of violence, including sexual violence, have been perpetrated against children. We also note with concern the reference in the Secretary-General's report to the recruitment of children by armed gangs in Cité Soleil.

Building the rule of law is moving forward with difficulty. In that regard, the appearance of former President Jean-Claude Duvalier before the Court of Appeal in Port-au-Prince on 28 February was a significant test. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, recalled, the State has the obligation to ensure that there is no impunity for the serious human rights violations perpetrated in the past.

The continuing differences between the executive power and the opposition parliamentarians continue to affect the country negatively. That structural paralysis of the institutions is certainly one of the root causes of the problems facing Haiti today. The holding of elections, initially set for 2012, is essential in order to move forward the necessary reforms. I can only echo the Secretary-General, who urgently calls on the Haitian authorities "to spare no effort in ensuring a free and fair environment for the holding of credible and inclusive elections as soon as possible". (*S/2013/139, para. 61*) Following the agreement of 24 December 2012, it is crucial to finalize the establishment of the temporary Electoral Council so as to launch an electoral process that has been too long in coming.

Luxembourg remains committed to helping Haiti to overcome the challenges linked to the humanitarian situation and the reconstruction of the country. The commitments that we undertook in 2010 will be honoured and we encourage the international community to remain fully mobilized. Food security is worsening. A high number of children under 5 continue to suffer from malnutrition. The scourge of cholera continues to claim victims and requires decisive action as the rainy season approaches. In that regard, we commend the initiative to eliminate cholera launched by the Secretary-General on 11 December 2012. The international community has the moral responsibility to help the affected population.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm Luxembourg's support for the conditions-based consolidation plan for the stabilization of Haiti, which provides for focusing MINUSTAH's efforts on a limited number of core tasks, achievable in four areas within a reasonable time frame. They are police training, electoral capacity-building, the rule of law and human rights, and governance.

However, we would like to underscore, as indicated in the plan, that such objectives can be achieved only by Haitian officials being even more resolutely committed to working for the good of the country and with a long-term partnership between the international community and Haiti. In that connection, we commend the integrated strategic framework for 2013-2016, drawn up by the United Nations and the Haitian Government. We hope that it will soon lead to tangible developments.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Fisher, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139). I express our support to him for the success of his task. I welcome the presence of Mr. Fernando Carrera Castro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, at this debate.

As we have seen over the past months, the Republic of Haiti remains vulnerable, in particular with regard to climate. While the country continues to struggle against the devastating effects of the 2010 earthquake, it has suffered in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and tropical storm Isaac, which affected more than 2 million people. Moreover, three years after the 2010 earthquake, it is clearly noticeable that the international community's humanitarian support in Haiti is diminishing despite the fact that the stabilization process has not yet been finalized. This quarterly debate of the Council on the developing situation in Haiti should enable us to draw attention to the various plans and strategies under way that are not always supported by adequately funding from the international community. We must ensure that the achievements of these past years are sustained.

On the political front, Morocco welcomes the many positive developments towards finalizing the necessary institutional reforms to strengthen the rule of law in Haiti. At the same time, as the Secretary-General notes, complications linked to establishing the temporary body of the Permanent Electoral Council continue to push back the date for the legislative, local and municipal elections — a phase that remains crucial.

On the security front, the situation remains stable despite an increase in demonstrations and some civil disputes. In the light of the consolidation plan and the gradual drawdown of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) troops, we must continue to underscore in parallel the strengthening of the police force. In that connection, we commend the increased effectiveness of the Haitian National Police, which continues to build its capacities with the support of MINUSTAH. Moreover, the rate of recruitment could be significantly sped up in order to achieve the objectives of the 2012-2016 plan, namely, increasing the force to 15,000 police officers.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, despite the fact that the number of people living in the camps continues to fall, partly thanks to the programmes launched by the Government with United Nations support, the Secretary-General's report notes with concern the worsening humanitarian situation in the country. With the withdrawal of more than half of the non-governmental organizations present in 2010 and many partners following the fall in available funding, the provision of basic services in the camps has considerably lessened. That is further exacerbated by the risk of a food crisis, which cannot be ignored, all the more since the recent Hurricane Sandy had a significant impact on the country's agricultural land. Combating the risk of food insecurity is, moreover, a core aspect of the humanitarian plan for 2013, which requires $144 million in funding.

Another key aspect of that plan is the fight against cholera and better sanitary conditions. Despite a decrease in the number of infected persons, there is a real risk of a new outbreak since the departure of many humanitarian groups and the lack of financial resources prevent the existing infrastructure from functioning.

In order to optimize MINUSTAH's presence in line with the country's needs, while keeping in mind the transition phase of the Mission, a consolidation plan for its withdrawal must be drawn up. We thank the Secretariat for the report's annex, which clearly present a concise and strategic version of that plan, which holistically addresses the main difficulties still to be overcome.

I should like to revert to one of the essential elements that will affect of the withdrawal schedule of MINUSTAH, which is the ability of the Haitian National Police to guarantee security throughout the country. We are encouraged by the fact that the various operations under way to respond to the recent resurgence of organized crime are being led by the National Police, with the support of the Mission's police and military components. We call on MINUSTAH to maintain its support in order to ensure that the Haitian National Police attains the objectives set down in the consolidation plan. We also welcome MINUSTAH's support in other key security sectors, such as capacity-building in the judiciary and penal sectors.

Morocco has always stood by Haiti and its people. Morocco is committed to continuing to help the country to strengthen its capacities and build a prosperous future. More than three years after the terrible earthquake that shook the country, we welcome the efforts undertaken by the Haitian authorities in various key areas for the reconstruction and stabilization of the country. The support and assistance of the international community and the United Nations remain essential to allowing Haiti to restore normalcy and meet the aspirations of its people.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Allow me to thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fisher, for his briefing.

The security situation in Haiti has been stable of late. The development and reconstruction process has moved forward. China welcomes the Haitian Government's successful hosting of an intersessional meeting of the Caribbean Community in February. At the same time, Haiti faces political, economic and humanitarian difficulties and still has much to do to return to the path of development. To that end, Haiti needs the international community's support.

We hope that the Haitian Government and the international community, as well as the Haitian political parties, will pursue the democratic process through reconciliation so as to guarantee the smooth conduct of free, fair and credible elections by 2014 and to consolidate the country's acheivements to date.

Hurricane Sandy ravaged Haiti, but the country is also encountering difficulties in improving living conditions, creating employment and promoting sustainable development. We call on the international community to pay close attention to the reconstruction efforts in Haiti, uphold its aid commitments, and improve the effectiveness of assistance so as to contribute constructively to the rebuilding and development of the country.

China supports the Secretary-General's initiative to eradicate cholera in Haiti. We welcome the efforts and contributions of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to peace and stability in the country. We note the consolidation plan 2013-2016 for MINUSTAH, submitted by the Secretary-General, and we hope that MINUSTAH will continue to carry out its Security Council mandate by helping Haiti to move forward with the political process, maintaining the security and stability of the country, and bolstering the rule of law and institutional stability.

Regarding the Mission's drawdown, we need to hear the views of the various parties involved so as to better guide this process.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fisher for his briefing.

At our last Security Council discussion of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in October 2012 (see S/PV.6842), I was cautiously optimistic about progress in Haiti and noted the important contribution that MINUSTAH had made to that progress. I tempered that with concern about political inertia blighting the decision-making necessary to the country's development.

Since then, we note that some important steps have been taken. In particular, the uniformed component of MINUSTAH has been reduced without any negative impact on the overall security and stability of the country, and MINUSTAH's consolidation plan has focused the Mission's activities on a number of core objectives. The final aim of the consolidation plan is for Haiti to have sufficient capacity to tackle its challenges itself. If the Government of Haiti takes the necessary concrete steps, we believe that that goal is attainable.

Notwithstanding this progress, there are two important areas of concern where we do need to see urgent progress. The first is the political situation. Political fragility is the most likely source of instability for Haiti. Efforts to support the political process must continue to be a priority. The appointment of a permanent electoral council will be a crucial step towards securing future stability. This needs to be completed quickly so that the long-overdue Senate and local elections can take place. It is vital that the permanent electoral council be able to act independently and that it be given the funding to do so.

The second area of concern is security, and specifically the capacity and capability of the Police. We continue to believe that building the capacity of the Haitian National Police, both operational and institutional, should be MINUSTAH's highest priority. Therefore, we are concerned to see that recruitment to the Haitian National Police is below the levels required to meet the target of 15,000 police officers by 2016. We would be interested in understanding why this is the case. Is there a lack of volunteers? Is it because the training infrastructure needs to be improved, or is it that MINUSTAH is not giving sufficient priority to the task? If recruitment and training continue at the current rate, how far below the target would we be in 2016? What annual recruitment rate is now going to be required to hit the target, and is that realistic and achievable?

We urge MINUSTAH to focus its resources on this effort in order to support the recently adopted Haitian National Police development plan. The Haitian National Police must also meet appropriate human rights standards if it is to win the confidence of the Haitian people. Effective oversight, transparency and zero tolerance for corruption will all be essential. The National Police should be able to rely on the support of all political parties.

Capacity-building in the justice sector, regionally and at the institutional level, is also necessary to complement the development of the police. We call on the public authorities to fulfil their constitutional obligations and duties, including the efficient and transparent operation of the judicial process, with no impunity, and an improvement in the management of the prison service.

In conclusion, MINUSTAH continues to achieve some encouraging results, but we have outlined two areas of concern — politics and police recruitment — that must be addressed. I would welcome the views of the

Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on those points.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fisher, for his intervention. I endorse the statements to be given by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Friends.

I share the doubts that were just expressed by my British colleague on the topics of elections and the police. At our most recent debate in October (see S/PV.6842), I noted the progress that had been made on the political and institutional levels. Unfortunately, the Secretary General's report before us today (S/2013/139) reminds us that not all the hopes we had formed have materialized. I would especially like to recall the words of the press statement issued by the Council on 28 January adopted by this same Council on January 28. The local and partial legislative elections have been postponed for too long. It is essential that they be held this year and that they be free, inclusive and credible. We call on all parties concerned to appoint without delay all members of the transitional board of the permanent electoral council.

We are also concerned by other information contained in the report on the proliferation of contested appointments, recent statements concerning the freedom of the press, and more generally systemic deficiencies in the area of human rights. We also note the relatively disappointing economic and fiscal forecasts that, coupled with difficulties related to climate — as noted by a number of my colleagues — may also explain the alarming multiplication of demonstrations of an economic and social character.

MINUSTAH has provided Haiti with 10 years of relative calm without political violence. However, this calm, in large part due to the deterrent presence of the Mission, does not reflect real, fundamental progress allowing the Haitian National Police to ensure security and stability on its own. We support the guidelines proposed by the Haitian authorities for the period 2012 to 2016, including the goal of increasing the number of police officers from 10,000 to 15,000. However, there is reason to doubt how realistic that goal is. MINUSTAH must remain engaged in that collective effort.

Lastly, we support the commitment of the United Nations and the Secretary-General's personal efforts to help Haiti eradicate cholera. We believe that is not an unattainable goal. We also think that, in the short term, that could include the targeted measures on which we are currently working with the Haitian authorities.

MINUSTAH must continue to adapt to developments in the situation, both in terms of nature and scope, so as to fulfil its dual objective, namely, to contribute to the maintenance of peace as well as to promoting Haitian national ownership by strengthening the rule of law and its major instruments, that is, the police and justice sectors.

Obviously, we must avoid a hasty departure of the Mission. However, the indefinite continuation of a peacekeeping mission of this magnitude is not an option either. The departure of MINUSTAH should not be a taboo, but that prospect should serve as a catalyst. We must define and create the conditions for its success. When must contemplate a withdrawal date, along with a desired end result and a post-MINUSTAH presence for the United Nations.

In that regard, we welcome the consolidation plan set out in the report of the Secretary-General. That plan provides for the Mission a credible time horizon, for we owe Haitians clarity as to what we can achieve in a reasonable time frame. We fully endorse the four priority areas that have been identified, as well as an approach based on metrics for calibrating the evolution of the Mission.

I should like to conclude by commending MINUSTAH staff for their dedication. I also commend the Acting Special Representative for his energetic efforts in this period of transition in the Mission.

Ms. King (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I also thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fisher for his briefing on the situation in Haiti. I would like to convey Australia's deep gratitude to all the staff of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for their hard work in consolidating stability in Haiti. We acknowledge the efforts made towards recovery and stabilization in Haiti over recent years, in particular in the face of a range of complex challenges and the impact of natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Isaac.

In order to address the difficult challenges ahead, it is vital that Haiti build, with the continued support of the international community, a system of Government that functions effectively and can build the capacities of

the country, and thereby serves the needs of the Haitian population. In that context, we share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General and others about the ongoing political stalemate in Haiti, including in the establishment of the provisional electoral council. The stalemate erodes confidence in the political system, could undermine the prospects for making further development gains and could potentially undermine the valuable progress achieved so far. Credible, free and fair elections in 2013 are critical for Haiti's recovery, reconstruction and development. We urge that there be progress in appointing members to the provisional electoral council, so that partial legislative, municipal and local elections can be organized and then a permanent electoral council established.

Acknowledging the close link between political stability and economic development, we welcome Prime Minister Lamothe's statement that Haiti is open for business. But we note that political stability will strengthen that prospect.

The support that MINUSTAH is providing to prepare for elections must continue, including the technical assistance provided to electoral council staff. However, responsibility for overcoming the political impasse rests with Haiti's leaders themselves and will require new patterns of political consensus-building across key issues.

While we welcome the overall stable security situation, the marked increase in major crimes in the second half of last year is a concern. Efforts to support the protection of vulnerable groups in Haiti therefore remain an important part of the work of MINUSTAH. In particular, as others have mentioned, sexual and gender-based violence continues to have a devastating impact on vulnerable groups, particularly women and children in impoverished districts, displaced persons camps and remote areas. It is important that the capacity of both the Haitian National Police and the judicial system be built to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence.

More broadly, a functional legal system is vital to ensuring accountability, upholding human rights and delivering access to justice — and to building confidence among citizens in the institutions of the State. We support the Secretary-General's proposal to develop a national justice development plan to strengthen the rule of law and build judicial capacity.

Although there has been a drop in cholera infection rates, we remain concerned about the epidemic and the increasing cholera mortality rates. Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy, Australia we wre pleased to contribute to the the Caribbean Community progreamme for the provision of drinking water, sanitation, et cetera for Haitians at risk from cholera. We strongly support the Secretary-General's initiative for the elimination of cholera in Haiti and the leadership of Dr. Paul Farmer as his Special Adviser.

We welcome the work that is beeing done to develop a plan for MINUSTAH's reconfiguration and conditions-based consolidation, as well as the inclusion of the consolidation plan in the annex to the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/139). The definition of core tasks for the Mission will enable it to take forward its work in partnership with Haitian authorities in areas in which it can have the most positive impact. In our view, the four areas of focus constitute an appropriate consolidation of MINUSTAH's efforts. An important aspect in taking forward the plan will be to identify and review appropriate measures for assessing progress against key benchmarks, especially as we continue to review MINUSTAH's mandate and force levels.

Policing is particularly important, as is often the case with stabilization missions — in this case, building the capacity of the National Police to gradually assume full responsibility for security throughout the country. We recognize the joint efforts of the international community and MINUSTAH in assisting the Haitian National Police to meet major benchmarks set out in its five-year development plan.

Creating durable and transformative change such as that being undertaken by Haiti takes time. Strengthening institutions and establishing good governance to the stage of providing security, justice and jobs and breaking cycles of poverty and violence is a long-term effort. The challenge for the international community, therefore, is to sustain its collaboration with Haiti. The recent finalization of the integrated strategic framework for 2013 to 2016 between the United Nations system and the Haitian Government is a very welcome step forward in that continuing partnership. We welcome the alignment of the framework with Haiti's strategic development plan, and we encourage the continued close collaboration between MINUSTAH, the United Nations system, the Haitian Government and Haiti's other international partners to ensure a congruence of focus and effort.

Mr. Salifou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I wish, like other delegations, to thank Mr. Nigel Fisher for his presentation of the interim report (S/2013/139) on the United Nations Mission for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH). I also congratulate him on his appointment as Acting Head of Mission and assure him of the full support of my country in the performance of its new duties.

I shall focus my statement on the security, political and humanitarian situations.

Efforts in the security sector have been among the achievements of the cooperation between the Haitian Government and MINUSTAH. The Secretary-General's report indicates that the security situation remained stable despite the upsurge in civil unrest and a rise in crime. My country welcomes that stability and urges the Haitian authorities to continue the process of strengthening the operational capacity and modernization of the National Police, as well as to effectively fight against armed gangs, which are the main sources of insecurity in the country.

We therefore welcome the adoption by the Council of the National Police development plan for the period 2012 to 2016, which defines the strategic vision, objectives and means for implementation. We encourage Haiti's partners to continue to support the country so that the funding gap is bridged in order to allow for the achievement of all the objectives. We also call upon the competent authorities to carry out crime prevention and repression efforts in strict observance of the rule of law. In that regard, we encourage them to continue with the modernization of the legal and institutional framework of the security, judicial and penal sectors. However, we remain concerned by the gender-based and sexual violence highlighted in the report, especially against children. We commend the work undertaken by MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police aimed at raising awareness among potential victims of the remedies available to them.

With respect to the political situation, Togo welcomes the progress achieved by Haiti in stabilizing and building the rule of law, even though the positive dynamic set in motion last year by the Haitian political class might have led one to expect much more significant progress. Parliament's approval, in May 2012, of the appointment of Mr. Laurent Lamothe as Prime Minister, which put an end to months of political crisis, the enactment of constitutional amendments that had been pending since June 2011 and the establishment of the Superior Council of the Judiciary should pave the way to an end to the crisis. All of those events seemed to indicate that the political partisan divisions of the Haitian political class had been overcome and a collective commitment had been undertaken to quickly organize elections, thereby making it possible to gauge the true democratic progress achieved in Haiti.

Unfortunately, that dynamic was slowed by the failure of the political class to come to an understanding on the composition and designation of the institution that would organize the elections. In that regard, we applaud the work carried out by the Religions pour la paix coalition, which led the representatives of the executive branch and Parliament to sign, on 24 December 2012, an agreement on the modalities establishing a temporary electoral council. We welcome the information provided on the designation of the members of the three branches of Government that will have a seat in that body — an important step towards the holding of elections in Haiti.

We welcome the commitments undertaken by the President of the Republic and the National Assembly on 14 January, at the opening of the Assembly's first ordinary session of the legislative year, to organize free partial legislative, municipal and local elections this year and to see to it that the country takes responsibility for over half of the electoral budget. In that regard, we urge all Haitian political stakeholders to work on the basis of consensus so that preparations for the elections can be undertaken and the latter can take place in an inclusive and transparent manner. Moreover, Togo calls on Haitian authorities to continue the necessary reforms to restore the State's legal framework, establish and strengthen public institutions and improve their people's lives.

The humanitarian situation in Haiti remains a source of serious concern for my country. With the gradual withdrawal of humanitarian agencies, the living conditions in the camps, where there is still a very high number of internally displaced persons, continue to deteriorate. The Secretary-General's report also notes that there was a significant decrease in the provision of basic services owing to a decrease in the level of funds available, and Togo fears a return of the cholera epidemic, the beginnings of which have already been announced. My country therefore calls on the international community to further help the Haitian authorities to invest in the provision of drinking water and sanitation infrastructure in order to counter the

resurgence of the epidemic. My country believes that, in the absence of clear legal responsibility incumbent upon it, the United Nations should continue to fulfil its moral responsibility to help the Haitian authorities to eradicate that disease, the source of which is well known.

I would like to conclude by calling upon the entire political class and people of Haiti to face the significant obstacles and challenges before them in terms of improving governance in their country, stimulating growth and reducing poverty in order to stop the fruitless political infighting that impedes their country's path towards progress. My country believes that the international community should remain at Haiti's side, but that it is up to Haitians themselves to face their own challenges and find the most appropriate solutions to them. To that end, their political institutions and structures responsible for upholding the rule of law must be reinforced, and the electoral process must be free, transparent, peaceful, credible and legitimate in order to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the country. Finally, my country hopes that the plan for restructuring and reorganizing MINUSTAH and its activities and its progressive withdrawal from Haiti will, rather than weakening support to the Haiti, contribute to refocusing its efforts on the areas of priority interest to the country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nigel Fisher, for his briefing on the situation in Haiti. Overall, in spite of the country having recently been put to the test, its Government and people, with the active support of the international community, have been able to progressively stabilize the situation.

Unfortunately, the political process in Haiti continues to be shaky. There has been rising political rhetoric recently, which certainly has not served to eliminate the differences between the executive branch and Parliament. An important step in achieving stability and moving towards democracy could be the holding of partial parliamentary and municipal elections. We hope that the Government will continue to work on the process for national dialogue and hold elections this year. The United Nations must provide all the necessary support to Haiti's electoral process. All political forces in the country should demonstrate the utmost calm and restraint and resolve disputes exclusively through legal mechanisms.

We were concerned to learn that the situation with respect to crime in the country continues to be troublesome. It is clear that stabilization is impossible without putting an end to violence, ensuring that the rights of all citizens are upheld and effectively combating organized crime and corruption.

Without a doubt, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti plays a leading role in all of those areas, as underscored in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139). Peacekeepers have much work to do in vigorously and dynamically assisting the Government. In the future, Haiti must continue to be supported in enhancing the rule of law and law enforcement so that, in the end, security is ensured by the national forces alone.

The social, economic and humanitarian situations continue to be of concern. Along those lines, there must be active participation by United Nations funds and programmes in the rebuilding of the country, peacebuilding activities and coordination among donors.

It is worrisome that, in spite of large-scale international assistance, the cholera epidemic has not yet been eradicated. While the number of cases are falling, they still remain numerous. In that respect, we welcome the active and sustainable results-based initiatives of the Secretary-General to combat that illness.

With respect to the consolidation plan for the Mission, we feel that the basic criteria for adjustments to the mandate and configuration must continue to be based on the actual security situation. That is directly tied with the level of readiness of the National Police. On the whole, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to focus the mandate of the Mission on a number of objectives that could be successfully attained over the course of four or five years. However, we must recognize that the announced goals and measurement indicators are ambitious and require future discussion among Council members.

We agree that the internal political mechanisms in Haiti are of the utmost importance at this time. Currently, without them, security, stability and sustainable development cannot be achieved, and therefore no

changes can be made to the configuration of the Mission. The current situation shows that the Haitian Government and the international community — in particular the United Nations — face a host of complex challenges in resolving crucial peacebuilding issues for the country, such as achieving national consensus and consolidating society, including on the humanitarian and economic fronts. The Haitian Government must play a leading role. It bears responsibility for the effective implementation of international assistance and must play an active role in coordinating that assistance.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Gaspard (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by thanking the President of the Council for having convened this debate. I welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139), and I congratulate his Acting Special Representative for his briefing. I also thank the various speakers for their constructive comments.

Today's debate in the Council, five months after the adoption of resolution 2070 (2012), allows us to take stock of the progress made in Haiti and the main challenges that remain. Along those lines, it is important to briefly recall the strategic guidelines and core objectives of the Government's activities.

First, on the humanitarian front, for the Haitian authorities it was a matter of facing emergency issues, in particular the situation of those made homeless by the earthquake, as well as to launch far-reaching projects to rebuild the country based on six core priorities, namely, education, employment, the rule of law, the environment, energy and children. In that respect, the objective is to place the country sustainably and irreversibly on the path of development.

Today it is clear that Haiti has made significant progress. On the humanitarian front, as noted in the report, between 2010 and early 2013, thanks to the Government's measures and the backing of the United Nations and other humanitarian partners, 1,178,000 displaced people have been resettled. That represents a basic reduction of 77 per cent of the homeless population in terms of the initial figures.

In combating cholera, despite a reoccurrence in some parts of the country, the results of cross-cutting efforts are encouraging. Cholera-related mortality was reduced from 5.3 per cent in 2010 to 1.2 per cent by the end of 2012. The cholera prevalence of 43 cases per 1,000 in 2011 was reduced to 6 cases per 1,000 in 2012. The initiative of the Secretary-General to create a fund to combat cholera in Haiti and his appointment of Dr. Paul Farmer are most welcome in that regard.

More generally, measures taken in various domains are beginning to bear fruit. With respect to education, the Government has enrolled more than 1 million children through its universal education programme, with the assistance of funds-transfer programmes, and is guaranteeing that mothers receive cash stipends in order to motivate them to keep their children in school and out of the work place.

Economically speaking, measures undertaken have led to stabilization of the macroeconomic situation, attracting foreign investors and combating unemployment. They have resulted in thousands of jobs and increasingly promising economic prospects.

In that context, Caracol Industrial Park in the north of the country — one of the largest of the Caribbean — was inaugurated and could create 20,000 direct jobs and up to 60,000 indirect jobs. Moreover, it should be noted that the Government has considerably increased public spending to rebuild roads, airports, public buildings and housing projects,, thereby creating immediate employment.

In the area of the rule of law, mindful that the independence of the judiciary is a sine qua non for establishing a culture of the rule of law, the Martelly-Lamothe Government has set up the Superior Council of the Judiciary and filled vacancies in the Supreme Court, which is the country's highest level court. Additional measures were undertaken to train judicial staff, increase the number of prisons, combat prolonged pretrial detention and increase the number of peace tribunals. All of those initiatives aim to guarantee respect for and the protection of human rights.

In the area of State reform, the Government is reforming public administration through its State reform framework, which was launched last October to cover the five years from 2012 to 2017. The programme was established following an observed lack of effectiveness in the public administration's service to the public. It must therefore be modernized to improve its public service capacity.

With respect to corruption, the Government has strengthened existing bodies by providing them with the necessary funding. Therefore, due to the efforts of the Anti-Corruption Unit, more than 200 State officials implicated in an embezzlement affair involving funds for universal education were arrested and prosecuted.

On the political front, my delegation notes the concerns expressed with regard to delays in following the electoral calendar for convening interim legislative elections and municipal and local elections. We reaffirm the firmly expressed will of the Government to work to achieve those milestones as quickly as possibly based on the utmost honesty and transparency and strict adherence to democratic norms.

In that vein, the Government hails the recent appointment of three parliamentary representatives to the permanent electoral council, which will organize the elections in order to fill the one third of vacancies in the Senate and establish the local authorities. Those are important elements of democratic governance that the President and the Prime Minister are seeking to advance.

On the security front, the situation has generally improved greatly, thanks to the efforts of the Haitian National Police, supported by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

According to some studies, Haiti had 8 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012, which represents a much lower rate as compared to other countries of the region, which had 25 per 100,000 inhabitants. The security situation is therefore satisfactory.

The striking success of the twenty-first summit of the heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community, which took place in February in Port-au-Prince, was highly important to the Haitian Government.

All of those facts represent that wide differences exist between perception and reality. The Government will therefore continue its efforts to maximize security throughout the country.

The Haitian National Police development plan for 2012-2016 stipulates a progressive increase from 10,000 to 15,000 members in 2016, and will further professionalize the institution and bolster its operational capacities. In that regard, my delegation welcomes MINUSTAH's work and supports its draft 2013-2016 consolidation plan. We also take the opportunity to thank all of the countries contributing troops to MINUSTAH.

On the social front, the Haitian Government, with the help of many international organizations, including the World Bank and UNICEF, has launched many social programmes aimed at creating a social safety net in the country. Those programmes have helped to alleviate the situation of many families facing extreme poverty.

Despite those tangible steps forward, many challenges remain. There are many humanitarian and structural issues involving development in Haiti. Allow me to highlight two of them.

The first concerns the funding of reconstruction and development programmes and projects as defined by the Government. That remains the core issue in tackling emergency situations, such as the displaced persons camps, food and security, as well as more general matters of reconstruction. Resource mobilization is therefore crucial. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the main donor countries and to reiterate our call to them to continue to demonstrate their generosity and understanding to Haiti, in order to contribute over the long term to the country's reconstruction.

The second challenge is the matter of the country's vulnerability in terms of natural disasters. Without improved consideration of that problem, reconstruction tasks cannot be appropriately addressed.

Finally, the Haitian Government's core objective is to sustainably and irreversibly set the country on the path of development, as a precondition to the lasting improvement of its people's living conditions. The Government possesses the necessary political will and is mindful that Haitian stakeholders must be the real motors of those ambitious objectives. However, we also understand that given the limited resources of our country, we require the genuine and effective support of our international partners to attain our goals. The Government therefore renews its commitment to work hand in hand with its partners and with the Council.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): I thank you, Sir, for organizing this important debate. I also thank Mr. Nigel Fisher for his briefing and for his excellent work as Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Interim Head of the United Nations Stabilization

Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). I appreciate the contribution just made by the Ambassador of Haiti, Mr. Gaspar, and I welcome the participation of Mr. Fernando Carrera Castro, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, in our debate.

Brazil values the concept of a consolidation plan that foresees the conditions for a sustainable transition of the current United Nations presence in Haiti, in line with the security situation on the ground. We agree that the tasks performed today by MINUSTAH should be progressively transferred to the Haitian authorities, as the development of national capacities allows. We also support the concept that troop levels should be adjusted as MINUSTAH prepares to gradually disengage.

Nevertheless, financial considerations must not be the driving force behind the reduction of the United Nations presence in Haiti. Although we understand the current financial constraints, the situation on the ground and the assessment of the Haitian Government's ability to assume responsibilities should be the decisive factors in determining the level and nature of the future United Nations presence in Haiti. If we allow financial needs to dictate the pace of transition, we will deviate from the responsible and controlled exit strategy to which the Security Council is committed.

MINUSTAH's consolidation plan must be owned by Haitians as a platform for the development of critical capacities. It must entail a true partnership around key common objectives. Moreover, it must ensure that when the time comes for transferring responsibilities, international partners, agencies, funds, programmes and, more important, the Haitian Government, will come together in a coherent strategy and that the support and resources needed will be provided.

That is especially important with regard to the Haitian National Police (HNP). We welcome the Haitian commitment to the strengthening of the HNP and to adjusting its recruitment process to the objective of having 15,000 police officers by 2016.

Likewise, the appropriate organization by Haiti of the upcoming elections is a fundamental step in the country's efforts to fully exert its institutional and political responsibilities. In that connection, too, sustained international support is needed. Strengthening the rule of law, democracy and human rights are also central areas to consolidating stability.

Let us not forget, however, that economic growth with job creation and social inclusion is an absolutely essential dimension of stability in Haiti. It is the first priority that must continue to guide the international approach to the situation in the country.

International engagement remains key to the development, in an integrated manner, of critical capacities in those core areas. Brazil renews its long-term commitment to Haiti in that regard.

Our sister nation of Haiti has made important strides in its quest for recovery from one of the worst natural catastrophes of our time. Yet, Haiti's resilience was again put to a test. The impact of the last hurricane season and rising living costs compound a very difficult scenario, which still requires the sustained attention of the international community. It is widely accepted that, in spite of the progress achieved, a lot remains to be done.

In that connection, it is troubling that, due to financial constraints, important international partners are pulling out their assistance to the country, even in the face of worrying humanitarian needs. That trend is not in line with MINUSTAH's consolidation plan laid out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/139) before us. In fact, it contradicts one of its fundamental assumptions. Only through an active, permanent effort to mobilize the necessary resources to fill the spaces progressively left open by MINUSTAH will the consolidation plan succeed.

As a true partnership, in full respect of Haiti's sovereignty, the consolidation strategy also envisages steps that can only be decided upon by Haitians themselves. Those steps, in turn, need an environment of cooperation and commitment to the highest interests of the Haitian population and to a fully functional political system. We are confident that all Haitian political actors will continue to pursue dialogue and democratic consolidation.

As recognized by the Security Council and by the Group of Friends of Haiti last January, the holding of local and legislative elections is a fundamental step in Haiti's path to peace, stability and development. Brazil expects that the Haitian leadership will heed that call and take the necessary measures to ensure the organization of elections in the shortest possible time frame.

We note recent efforts and constructive initiatives to move the political process forward, and we encourage further steps in that direction. We remain confident in the Haitian ability to craft the necessary consensus to navigate through the complexities of the process, with a view to creating the conditions for further cooperation, investment and institutional consolidation.

The Haitian Government and people can continue to count on Brazil's unwavering engagement and solidarity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti, which includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the United States of America, France, Guatemala, Peru and my own country, Uruguay. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate to discuss the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139) on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The Group of Friends welcomes today's presence of the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Interim Head of MINUSTAH, Mr. Nigel Fisher. We thank him for his comprehensive briefing and for taking responsibility for the Mission in this crucial period. The Group would also like to express its gratitude and recognition to Ambassador Mariano Fernández Amunátegui for his dedicated work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti and Head of MINUSTAH.

The strengthening of the rule of law and democratic institutions, the establishment of a political culture conducive to consensus-building and the improvement of socioeconomic conditions are key elements to achieve greater and sustainable stability and prosperity in Haiti. In that regard, the Group of Friends of Haiti strongly encourages all political actors in Haiti to deepen their dialogue and cooperation towards their country's democratic consolidation. The Group reiterates the importance of the timely realization, with MINUSTAH's assistance, of free, transparent and fair partial legislative, municipal and local elections. They constitute an essential and urgent step towards lasting stability, recovery and development in Haiti. The effective establishment of the country's Electoral Council will constitute a major milestone in that process. In that regard, the Group of Friends looks forward to positive developments related to the appointment, as soon as possible, of members of a transitional college of the permanent Electoral Council.

The Group of Friends of Haiti recognizes the critical role of MINUSTAH in ensuring stability and security in Haiti and commends MINUSTAH for continuing to assist the Government of Haiti to ensure a secure and stable environment.

The Group of Friends notes that the overall security situation in Haiti has remained relatively stable since the previous report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/678), although it was marked by an increase in civil unrest and serious crimes. That has allowed MINUSTAH to implement the drawdown established in resolution 2070 (2012) without undermining the security and stability of Haiti.

The Group welcomes the submission of a concise version of the MINUSTAH consolidation plan 2013-2016, which has been discussed with the Government of Haiti and which includes a description of the scope of the conditions-based consolidation plan, the risks and challenges, a core set of mandated tasks that the Mission should focus on with the respective benchmarks, and the continuation of the work of consolidation of its substantive, security and support pillars, all with the objective of allowing the Haitian authorities to gradually assume their fundamental responsibilities for their country's future.

The Group of Friends reiterates the importance of the commitment by the Government of Haiti to strengthen the rule of law and to make further progress in security sector reform. In that regard, the Group would like to emphasize the critical role the Haitian National Police plays in Haiti's security and stability and to stress the importance of completing the ongoing strengthening, professionalization and reform of the police force in order to enable it to assume full responsibility for the country's security.

The Group of Friends of Haiti reiterates its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations towards sexual exploitation and abuse. In that regard we expect all United Nations personnel to adhere to the highest standards of conduct. The Group urges all actors involved to take responsibility for ensuring that such cases are prevented, allegations investigated and those to blame held accountable.

The Group welcomes the significant progress made in 2012 in the resettlement of persons displaced by the 2010 earthquake. However, we are also concerned about the deterioration of living conditions in the remaining camps and about the situation of women and children in particular, an example of the humanitarian challenges that Haiti continues to face.

The Group of Friends is aware of the continuing efforts being made by the Government of Haiti, MINUSTAH and others to protect vulnerable groups, but also notes with concern the need to improve the response of the criminal justice sector to rape complaints and serious crimes against children. We therefore call urgently for increased efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and children.

These and other challenges, such as the ongoing efforts to eliminate the cholera epidemic, remind us of the importance of maintaining cooperation between the international community and the Government of Haiti in order to meet the needs of the Haitian people. In that regard, the Group of Friends of Haiti acknowledges the efforts of the donor community and asks its members to fulfil the pledges they have made without delay.

The Group of Friends of Haiti understands that security, development and stability are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. We therefore underscore the importance of addressing the issue of unemployment and the delivery of basic social services in a meaningful way. At the same time, the Group points out that there can be no genuine stability or sustainable development in Haiti without strengthening democratic institutions and a credible democratic process. In that context, the Group emphasizes the importance of promoting the rule of law by strengthening Haitian institutions, and further reaffirms MINUSTAH's responsibility for supporting the Haitian State in the areas of good governance, the expansion of State authority and the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with its mandate.

Finally, the Group of Friends reaffirms its solidarity with and commitment to the people and Government of Haiti in their pursuit of stability, reconstruction, recovery, socioeconomic development and democratic consolidation. We support and salute the women and men of MINUSTAH for their dedication and tireless efforts to promote recovery and stability in Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the organization of this debate, and we welcome the presence today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala. We also thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti, Mr. Nigel Fisher, for his briefing, and would like to particularly acknowledge Ambassador Mariano Fernández Amunátegui for his recent stint at the helm of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Chile associates itself with the statement just delivered by the Permanent Representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

In 2012 we witnessed significant milestones in the ongoing process in Haiti: Parliament's ratification of the new Government, the appointment of the Superior Council of the Judiciary, and the publication of the amendments to the Haitian Constitution all deserve the recognition of the international community. Similarly, initiatives such as the implementation of Haiti's strategic development plan, the new cooperation mechanism and the strategic development plan of the Haitian National Police for 2012-2016 are also pertinent examples of this ongoing process.

Such progress notwithstanding, there are areas in which improvements must be made, and urgently, in strengthening institutions, consolidating the rule of law and improving the people's socioeconomic situation — all elements that are essential to ensuring the security, stability, governability and economic and social progress of the Haitian people. There is no question that a political dialogue between the various State authorities is essential; it is the only way to achieve a lasting consensus that will enable an inclusive society to be built in Haiti that fully respects human rights and can address ongoing challenges. While reiterating Chile's commitment to working with Haiti multilaterally and bilaterally, we call on the Haitian authorities to take steps immediately to encourage this political dialogue and the quest for consensus. In that regard, and with the support of MINUSTAH, the holding of free, fair and credible national, municipal and local elections is an essential part of this process and requires the speedy creation and functioning of a permanent electoral council.

My delegation recognizes MINUSTAH's central role in maintaining a stable and secure environment in Haiti and the progress the Haitian National Police

has made in that area. Despite the increase in civil disturbances and crime, the stabilization of the security situation has enabled it to work on the reconfiguration and agreement established in the last renewal of its mandate. In that context, my delegation welcomes MINUSTAH's consolidation plan 2013-2016, and commends its establishment of concrete goals and targets in the areas of political development, increasing electoral capacity, the rule of law and human rights, and governance, agreed on with the Haitian authorities. Similarly, we commend the plan's initiation of a strategic review process. These goals will enable the Mission to use its resources and evaluate its achievements more efficiently so as to enable a gradual and sustained transfer of responsibilities to the Haitian authorities.

In that regard, we stress that any budget reductions for the Mission should be justified by the situation as observed on the ground, and also take into consideration the connection between security tasks and development, for which rapid-impact projects, programmes for reducing community violence and other initiatives supporting local populations are key factors. In that context, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative for the elimination of cholera in Haiti and the work that MINUSTAH has done in this area, and calls on donors to fulfil their financial pledges.

Regarding priorities for the police, we hope especially that the Haitian National Police can gradually assume greater responsibility in the area of public security, in line with its development plan for 2012-2016. To that end, it is fundamental that the annual process of police recruiting and training be carried out, which requires not only efforts by the Haitian authorities, but also by the international community. The Chilean Government will continue to participate in police training through its bilateral cooperation programmes.

In looking at Haiti from the perspective of its development since the devastating earthquake in 2010 until now, the progress reflected in a decrease of 75 per cent in the internally displaced people in the camps of refugees demonstrate the outstanding work done by the Haitian authorities in that area, with the support of the United Nations. That is a clear demonstration that coordinated will on the part of the various actors can lead to positive results.

For my delegation, it is essential to reiterate the importance of interaction among Haitian authorities in maintaining political stability and achieving development. Without such positive interaction, it will be impossible to appropriately meet the pending challenges in strengthening the rule of law and consolidating democratic institutions, especially in the areas of administration of justice, human rights, penitentiary administration, gender-based violence and the protection of minors. It is also fundamental to lay the foundation for development by attracting investment and generating employment, which will make it possible to grapple with the difficult socioeconomic situation and the decrease in food security in Haiti.

As we reaffirm the commitment and solidarity of the Government of Chile with the people and authorities of Haiti, we also believe it necessary to continue cooperating to promote the development of institutional capacity in Haiti under the principle of national ownership. The future of Haiti demands it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is once again participating in this semi-annual debate on the question of Haiti as proof and in recognition of Spain's commitment with this country in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which is therefore so close to us. Haiti is a friend nation and we are friends of Haiti. For that reason, while I associate myself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, I would like to make some additional considerations in my national capacity.

Spain has decisively supported the reconstruction of Haiti since the terrible earthquake that devastated the country in January 2010. However, Haiti's institutional weakness has impeded to date the achievement of desirable levels of implementation. That is why the aid disbursed has not yet reached its full potential. Our Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Iberoamerica conveyed this message to both His Excellency President Martelly and to His Excellency Prime Minister Lamothe on the occasion of his visit to Haiti in February.

The Government of President Martelly has been working with determination to reduce the endemic problems of the Haitian political system. However, he has not yet entirely managed to get Haitian institutions

working more efficiently. Local elections and the election of a third of the Senate are still pending as a result of the inability of Haitian political actors to establish a permanent electoral council, as provided for in the 1987 Constitution and which to date has not been able to be formally established. Partial improvements have been made in recent days, as mentioned by the representative of Haiti, and we very much welcome them. However, the process is still unfinished at the present time.

Spain wishes to make a clear and convincing appeal to all Haitian political actors to assume their responsibilities and to work in order to achieve a smooth and predictable operation of the institutions. As the Security Council has already stated, the outstanding elections should be held in the course of this year.

Strong political institutions will make it possible to move forward in the reconstruction process in a much more efficient way than what has been the case thus far. It will also make it possible to shape the image of Haiti abroad of a country that is moving forward in its transformation into a secure, stable and socially equitable country.

Finally, I would like to express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his semi-annual report (S/2013/139) on the activities of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, as well as for the consolidation plan of the Mission for 2013-2016 included in the report.

Despite some improvements, there are still many challenges in Haiti. In order to successfully tackle those challenges and fulfil the expectations of its people, it is essential that Haiti's political leaders redouble their efforts and renew their commitment to the country's reconstruction and stabilization process.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

I would like, first of all, to thank Mr. Nigel Fisher for his briefing, and the representative of Haiti for his statement. During our last statement before the Security Council, the European Union welcomed the relative stabilization of the political scene since the appointment, in May 2012, of the new Prime Minister Mr. Laurent Lamothe (see S/PV.6842). The European Union also expressed the hope that political reforms would move forward thanks to the enactment, early in 2012, of several amendments to the 1987 Constitution. We reaffirm our full support for the efforts of President Martelly and Prime Minister Lamothe to move forward in the economic, political and social renewal of Haiti.

In that context, we regret to note that the ongoing tense political climate, the lack of cooperation and a tendency towards pointless political confrontation have to date impeded the progress of those reforms, which the still-fragile Haitian democratic system desperately needs. It is particularly worrisome that the different parties concerned have not yet succeeded in agreeing upon the establishment of an electoral council, which has been an obstacle to setting a date for the forthcoming elections. We can only reiterate our appeal to all stakeholders to work responsibly and in the interest of Haitian society as the whole. The European Union supports the Secretary-General's request for free, fair and transparent elections to be held without delay, and reiterates our readiness to financially contribute to the convening of future elections and to the strengthening of the capacities of the future permanent electoral council.

Nevertheless, we know that the slow-down in the reform process is not limited to electoral matters. We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2013/139) in a certain number of areas where little progress, even backsliding, has been noted. In that regard, I am referring to persistent shortcomings in the justice sector, arbitrary appointments in many key areas of State administration, incidents of forced evictions of displaced persons still living in camps and a continuing climate of impunity, among other things. On the whole, those observations lead to very mixed results regarding the improvement of governance, even though President Martelly has rightly made the rule of law a priority of his presidency.

The European Union will continue, within the framework of its political dialogue with Haiti, to remind all interested stakeholders of the urgency of adopting a more inclusive approach in inter-institutional relations and to work for national consensus on a small but realistic number of political and socioeconomic reforms on which to move forward in cooperation with international partners.

With respect to certain aspects of the report of the Secretary-General, in particular on activities related to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the European Union reiterates its support and appreciation for the contribution to security and stability that the Mission continues to provide in Haiti. We welcome the consolidation plan for the Mission and the focus of its future activities around the four priority areas proposed by the Secretary-General.

Hand in hand with other donors, and in the framework of its programmes for cooperation with Haiti, the European Union will make its contribution to fulfilling the responsibilities that will no longer be part of MINUSTAH's mandate, as well as to assisting in the progressive handover of MINUSTAH's mandated competencies to the Haitian authorities. In that vein, the support of the European Union for a broad range of State administration reforms, announced by the Government in November 2012, should facilitate that handover by improving the capacities of Haitian institutions.

The European Union will continue to consider other possible contributions in security sector reform, including in transborder cooperation with the Dominican Republic in order to back the Haitian Government's activities.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for convening today's debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Nigel Fisher, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, for his presence here today and for his assessment of the situation on the ground.

It was with great interest that Mexico heard the detailed assessment of political, socioeconomic and security situation in Haiti. We believe it necessary for the international community and the United Nations to redouble their efforts to lay the foundation for sustainable development in the country. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/139) describes a complex panorama and proposes a consolidation plan to concentrate the efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in specific areas to promote political stability.

We agree with the identification of the four priority areas of the plan: development of police capacity, building of electoral capacity, the rule of law and human rights, and governance. However, we are concerned that actions that have been successful in the past have been left out, such as the quick impact projects that put into place strategies to promote economic recovery and the long- and medium-term projects that have made it possible to meet persistent needs in humanitarian aid, health care, food security and basic infrastructure.

We agree that while the Mission can be supported by other actors working on the ground, including those in the private sector, MINUSTAH should not disengage itself from specific key areas such as education, food and agriculture, which can be a source of long-term instability. It is necessary to have an ongoing firm commitment from the international community. In that regard, Mexico calls on the Security Council, United Nations agencies and international agencies and partners to continue cooperating with the Haitian people and authorities to meet the economic and social challenges that remain prevalent in Haiti.

Mexico applauds the appointment of the members of the transitional college of the permanent electoral council, and hopes that their prompt entry into that body will be a departure point for holding local and municipal elections. It is necessary for Haiti to embrace a culture geared to building consensus to address the priority issues of development of the island. Also worthy of attention is the development of the capacity of the Haitian National Police so that it may extend its reach to the whole territory, enabling it to effectively address crime rates.

Mexico would like to highlight the decision to renew, with the Haitian Government's approval, the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, which occurred just a few days ago. The Human Rights Council has assessed the human rights situation in the country and taken stock of the Government's commitment to improving the quality of life of its citizens. No doubt that work will complement MINUSTAH's work in favouring governance in the country.

Mexico reiterates its full support for MINUSTAH and recognizes the value of the men and women who are deployed in the Mission to improve the situation in Haiti. The Government of Mexico will continue to support institution-building in the country, as well as long- and medium-term projects. We call for a possible reconfiguration of the Mission's mandate, taking into account considerations put forth today by troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as by members of the international community who are committed to the long-term stability and development of Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by thanking you and the delegation of the Russian Federation for having organized today's debate on Haiti.

We are having this debate at a time when, more than three years after the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti, the country is facing important choices for its future. In 2012, we were once again reminded that Haiti remains vulnerable to natural disasters when Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Isaac hit the country. Canada responded by providing emergency humanitarian assistance to those most in need in Haiti. The past year also brought some progress in reconstruction and development.

However, the ongoing stalemate in the organization of the long-overdue senatorial and municipal elections raises serious questions about the capacity of Haiti's democratic institutions. By encouraging a legitimate and credible electoral council to organize those elections, Haitian leaders have the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment and demonstrate their respect for democratic principles. If elections are not held in 2013, it will become increasingly difficult for the international community to accept excuses and delays. The long-awaited elections must be held in 2013, and as soon as possible.

Canada's partnership with Haiti has been in place for decades, and we are one of that country's most generous backers. Canada has provided the country with more than $1 billion in support since 2006. Canada has contributed to Haitian development priorities in a wide variety of areas — such as economic growth, food security and maternal and child health — through Canada's Muskoka initiative. Canada has also provided substantial humanitarian assistance following natural disasters to alleviate suffering of the Haitian people and meet their immediate needs.

Since February 2012, for example, we have been pleased to assist over 5,500 Haitian families displaced by the 2010 earthquake in relocating from the Champs de Mars camp, with the help of case workers, and in moving into safe accommodations. Likewise, our development assistance is helping women and children who cannot afford health-care services to gain access to health facilities and thus enjoy a better quality of life. Those are the kinds of results we want to continue seeing in Haiti.

Members of the Canadian Government have recently made several high-level visits to Haiti. In November 2012, our Minister of International Cooperation, Mr. Julian Fantino, and in February this year, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. John Baird, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Diane Ablonczy, visited Haiti to see the country's development first-hand. They met with President Martelly and Prime Minister Lamothe to discuss both the successes achieved and the existing challenges in the areas of the rule of law, security, governance and sustainable development, as well as the need to strengthen accountability and transparency.

During their visit, the ministers reiterated Canada's determination to support the Haitian Government in its resolve to better coordinate the efforts made by non-governmental organizations, donors and those partners that are present in the country. Canada is currently reviewing its long-term commitment in Haiti, as is the case with governmental programmes as a whole, so as to achieve sustainable results for the Haitian people, especially those most in need.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada continues to support the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In the coming months, Canada will be closely involved in the discussions regarding MINUSTAH's conditions-based consolidation plan, which entails a narrowing of MINUSTAH's activities to a core set of mandated tasks in the areas of security and stability, democratic governance and State legitimacy, and the rule of law, with respect for human rights.

This year again, we would like to commend MINUSTAH on its efforts to improve the security situation in Haiti and on its work to ensure that Haiti's

security institutions are well equipped, so that they can play a greater role in standing up for the freedom and security of Haitians themselves. In that regard, efforts must, in our judgement, continue seriously to focus on the capacity of the Haitian National Police as the primary security force in Haiti. We are pleased that the current Government has adopted its new police development plan for the 2012-2016 period. We urge the Haitian authorities to make all necessary efforts for its implementation, and we stand with them.

(*spoke in French*)

The Government of Haiti has repeatedly asserted that Haiti is open for business. Canada welcomes this spirit and underlines that realizing that intent and achieving concrete outcomes will require a series of actions. To make that openness for business clear to the international community, steadfast political will is needed to establish a true rule of law in Haiti. Actions leading to further gains in economic development will also help provide the bedrock for future growth. A stronger rule of law will promote not only investor confidence but also the ability of small and medium-sized Haitian entrepreneurs to succeed.

Haiti's leaders must devote themselves to delivering the reforms that they have promised. Haitians expect a Government where the public interest is respected, the rule of law prevails, human rights are protected, the economy grows stronger and development is sustainable. The Haitian people and their partners in Canada expect no less.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Sir, for presiding over this debate. Let me also thank Mr. Mariano Fernández Amunátegui, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), for his significant contribution to the Mission. I would like also to thank Mr. Nigel Fisher for taking on the important responsibility for MINUSTAH. I would also like to pay tribute to the men and women of MINUSTAH for the commitment and fortitude they have demonstrated under difficult circumstances.

I welcome the Secretary-General's report on MINUSTAH (S/2013/139), issued on 8 March. As the report mentions, Haiti continues to face many challenges. Haiti still needs to improve its basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity and the provision of potable water, as well as social services, including access to education and medicine.

High levels of unemployment and crime also persist. The establishment of a temporary electoral council is also needed to carry out the next election in a peaceful and democratic manner. Many challenges remain for Haiti on its path to recovery, reconstruction and development. In addition, Hurricane Sandy hit the nation in late October. The international community responded promptly, and Japan provided an emergency grant of $1.2 million. However, more support is still needed.

The international community, however, also acknowledges and welcomes the progress that has been made in the recovery process in Haiti. Since the earthquake in 2010, more than 10 million cubic metres of debris have been removed, and the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been reduced by more than 75 per cent. Now that three years have passed since the deadly earthquake, the Mission remains highly necessary and significant, but the needs of the Haitian people have shifted. Haiti has made remarkable progress since Japan pledged $100 million towards emergency relief and reconstruction in 2010. Japan has actually already disbursed an amount exceeding that original pledge.

In recognition of that shift on the ground, Japan decided in July 2012 that it would wind down the operations of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's engineering unit in Haiti; the unit had withdrawn from Haiti by the end of December 2012. The number of personnel who have served in the Japanese contingent since its beginning totals approximately 2,200.

The contingent has made contributions to the recovery of Haiti through various efforts, including the removal of rubble, the dismantling of damaged buildings, the repair of facilities in IDP camps, road repair, the construction of orphanages, and the distribution of water in response to the outbreak of cholera. The contingent also contributed to human resources development in Haiti through the sharing of expertise on civil engineering equipment. That equipment also was finally donated to the Haitian Government.

The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's engineering unit was able to gain a great deal of experience in MINUSTAH. In that context, we would like to share

that experience here, in New York, at a seminar today. Starting at 2:30 p.m., the Permanent Mission of Japan, together with the Permanent Mission of Brazil, will host a seminar at the Japan Society focusing on the evolving roles of military engineering units in peacekeeping missions. Engineering units can play a critical enabling role in multidimensional missions as early peacebuilders. Our seminar will aim at illuminating, and gaining an in-depth picture of, the evolving roles of engineering units, as well as identifying future opportunities and challenges.

Even after the withdrawal of its engineering unit, Japan intends to continue to support Haiti. The Government of Japan will continue to provide support to Haiti for its restoration and the establishment of basic social services, mainly in the fields of health, hygiene and education. Japan recently decided to provide $5.7 million in food aid and $1.6 million in capacity-building assistance to the Haitian Government.

As the Council is aware, two years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake struck Japan, in March 2011. We are most grateful that the people of Haiti expressed their sense of solidarity with the people of Japan. I am confident that both Haiti and Japan, in close collaboration with the international community, will be able to overcome difficulties as we work towards a brighter future.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Thornberry (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to commend the initiative of the presidency of the Security Council to convene this open debate on the situation in Haiti. We also welcome the presence of the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, Mr. Nigel Fisher, and thank him for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Haiti (S/2013/139).

Peru wishes to continue to cooperate in order to achieve security, stability, sustainable development and institution-building in Haiti. My country has therefore actively participated in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since 2004, with a military contingent consisting of 366 soldiers and military officers in the general staff of the Mission. Similarly, Peru is a member of the Group of Friends of Haiti, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group for Haiti of the Economic and Social Council, the Group of Friends of Haiti of the Organization of American States and the Latin American Political Coordination Mechanism for Haiti.

Peru is convinced that there can be no sustainable social and economic development without strong institutions that promote and sustain that development. We also reaffirm the validity of the principle of national ownership, whereby the Haitian Government itself must lead the process to consolidate its national institutions, strengthen the rule of law, consolidate democracy and build capacity. In that regard, we believe that the work of MINUSTAH remains essential to providing the Haitian authorities with the security and support necessary to facilitate that process, in accordance with national strategies and priorities set out by them.

In that context, my delegation wishes to draw the attention of the Security Council to two aspects of the report of the Secretary-General that Peru considers to be of paramount importance. The first is the need for continued support to the Haitian authorities in establishing and strengthening strong public institutions that allow the problems currently facing the country to be addressed effectively. The second is the plan to reconfigure and strengthen MINUSTAH on the basis of the existing conditions in Haiti and the needs of the Haitian people.

As has already been noted by speakers who preceded me, in particular the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti — whose statement Peru endorses — we agree that the work of MINUSTAH in ensuring the stability and security of Haiti has been essential to the achievement of significant progress in strengthening the democratic institions and the rule of law in Haiti. However, we are also aware that the stability achieved is an opportunity that should be used to achieve a political agreement that would ensure the governability of the country in the long term. In that regard, recognizing the democratic aspirations of the Haitian people, my delegation calls on all political forces in Haiti to reach the agreements necessary to lay the foundations of the basic institutions for strengthening democracy in Haiti. We therefore hope for the early establishment of the permanent electoral council, the body responsible for ensuring that the elections are conducted transparently, democratically and credibly, while highlighting the significant support that MINUSTAH has been providing in the area of electoral assistance.

The progress registered by MINUSTAH in stabilizing Haiti in recent years allows us to look optimistically to the future. We therefore believe that the time has come to launch a process of gradual and orderly transition to a second phase of cooperation of the United Nations system for Haiti. In that respect, we welcome the development by the Secretary-General of a reconfiguration and consolidation plan for MINUSTAH to strengten the achievements made and to lay the foundation for long-term development programmes.

In that regard, Peru believes it important that the core objectives identified in the concise version of the MINUSTAH consolidation plan annexed to the report of the Secretary-General contain precise parameters and indicators that will measure progress achieved by the Haitian Government in areas crucial to strengthening the institutions and democracy of the country.

I also wish to acknowledge the progress in the institutionalization, professionalization and strengthening of the Haitian National Police, which has been playing a leading role in protecting and ensuring the safety of its citizens, as demonstrated by the recent transfer of security functions to the Police in four regions of Haiti. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the five-year development plan for the Haitian National Police for 2012-2016, which will in the near future endow the Haitian Police with the personnel necessary to maintain public order and security throughout the country and a strong institutional structure aimed at strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights.

It is clear that the cooperation of the United Nations system with Haiti is not limited to the invaluable support of MINUSTAH. Peru therefore believes that even broader and better coordination is necessary between MINUSTAH and the various agencies and programmes of the United Nations system on the ground.

Finally, my delegation is of the view that the significant achievements to date should not lull us into the false belief that the task of the United Nations in Haiti is complete, or close to being so. We therefore call on States Members of the Organization and the entire international community to continue their support to Haiti, highlighting the three areas that have a direct impact on the ongoing process of recovery and reconstruction of that country, namely, governability, security and development.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Fisher to respond to comments and questions.

Mr. Fisher: I will be brief. I would like to thank members and the other speakers for their comments and questions and for their support, especially with regard to the consolidated plan.

I will first take a few highlights on elections. As many representatives stated and I myself said, they have become a symbol or a touchstone for moving forward on a number of fronts on Haiti. We need the electoral council. We look forward to its early formation. But that, of course, is the first step in the development of a plan for the elections, which many said should be free, fair and credible and held this year. I will certainly take that message back to my counterparts.

Many speakers raised the current political fragility in Haiti and many looked at the importance of moving ahead across the board on redoubling efforts to promote constructive dialogue in a spirit of compromise. Many representatives talked about inclusive political dialogue, which is the way forward to enabling Haiti's leaders to focus increasingly on other necessary institutional reforms, especially in the area of the rule of law, and to facing the significant challenges of expanding not only the numbers of police but also their professionalism and presence across the country.

I think that the emphasis that many speakers placed on development and humanitarian considerations is also a very good reminder that whatever happens at the political and institutional levels, security and rule-of-law issues are there to create the necessary conditions not only for investment but also for ordinary Haitians to see changes in their lives, improved security, respect for their human rights and the ability to earn a living.

I therefore thank many speakers for emphasizing the continuing humanitarian challenges facing Haiti, as well as the difficulty in particular of exclusion based on gender and issues of gender-based violence.

Beyond the political fragility, on the issue of the police, there is no doubt that we are seeing increasing professionalism. Indeed, recruitment was slow last year: it fell below the 2011 levels. But I would like to affirm that, with the new training that we will begin in April, we foresee that 150 cadets will be ready for training. We are thus seeing the recruitment process begin to pick up.

We still face challenges in ensuring the rapid vetting of police cadets and the medical review process, but that is moving forward. We are looking to our own internal structure to ensure that we have the right mix of professionals able to focus on training and accompaniment of the police, and that includes not only initial training, but follow-up training as they move out of Port-au-Prince. Most police officers — some 70 to 75 per cent — are present in Port-au-Prince. We do need to see an increased distribution and presence around the country.

Many representatives have also commented on the mandate and the consolidation plan, and one reminded us all that the mandate should drive the budget. I just want to inform the Council that MINUSTAH will be undertaking a consultative review on the ground to test out the assumptions and projections of the consolidation plan. This will happen, of course, with the Government, with which we have agreed to set up an ongoing working group, as well as with Member States and others who are contributing to MINUSTAH and have a role and interest in our future. Several representatives said that this is an ambitious plan, but as I said it has been agreed with the Government, and it will be reviewed on a regular basis with the Government and of course brought back to the Council. I look forward to reporting back to the Security Council on the progress achieved in the future on the consolidation plan, which is really, essentially, our road map for accompanying Haiti on its journey to full national ownership and full national management of its own affairs.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6937

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6937th meeting
Thursday, 21 March 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Ms. Jiang Hua
	France	Mr. Briens
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Rwanda	Mr. Kayinamura
	Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2061 (2012) (S/2013/154)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

13-26635 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2061 (2012) (S/2013/154)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/154, which contains the second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2061 (2012).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kobler.

Mr. Kobler: At the outset, let me take this opportunity to wish happy Nowruz to all those who celebrate on 21 March.

I am honoured to present to the Council today the second report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/154) pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2061 (2012), on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I shall also brief Council members on the most recent developments in Iraq.

I would like to begin by describing two significant and contrasting events that recently took place in Iraq. On 27 February, Iraqi Airways flight number 157 landed at Kuwait International Airport. That historic flight was the first after the 22-year halt in commercial air traffic between Iraq and Kuwait. That event affirmed the strong desire of the leaders of Iraq and Kuwait to open a new chapter in their relations, which have been heavily burdened by history.

However, a few days later, on 4 March, more than 40 Syrian soldiers and 10 Iraqis were killed inside Iraqi territory. This week, a series of atrocious terrorist attacks added more innocent persons to the long list of victims of such attacks. My condolences go the families of the victims and to the people of Iraq.

Those incidents demonstrate how Iraqis face a complex set of interrelated problems, among them the very real potential for a spillover of violence from Syria. Such destabilization would add to and fuel the existing political and security challenges facing Iraq, which threaten the achievements of the past decade.

Since late December, tens of thousands of demonstrators in Iraq's western provinces have taken to the streets to voice their grievances. Their demands are centred around issues of human rights and access to basic services. They feel unprotected, insecure and excluded.

My colleagues and I witnessed that firsthand in Ramadi, Samarra, Mosul, Fallujah, Tikrit and Kirkuk. Around the country, we listened to the demonstrators' frustrations. Over time, they spoke more harshly and proposed more radical solutions.

The volatility on the streets is also reflected at the political level. The ministers of the Al-Iraqiya Sunni bloc continue their boycott of Cabinet meetings, which has lasted for almost three months. Political coalitions are weakening. In essence, the political fabric is fraying.

The Government has taken a number of initiatives to address the demands of the demonstrators. I have welcomed those efforts, which have yielded some results.

One such initiative was the establishment of a committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Hussein al-Shahristani. The committee has reported that it has facilitated the release of approximately 3,400 prisoners. In addition, all female prisoners have been transferred to their home governorates, where they will serve the remainder of their sentences. Those measures are in direct response to the demands of the demonstrators.

The committee has also reinstated pension payments for 11,000 public-sector retirees who were members of the former Baath regime. Combined with decisions on other issues, the al-Shahristani committee claims that its decisions have covered roughly 100,000 individuals.

A second committee, under the chairmanship of the head of the National Alliance, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, is

focused on finding common language for three pieces of highly contentious legislation, naemly, the law on counter-terrorism, the accountability and justice law, and a new general amnesty law. In that regard, tangible results still have to be achieved.

Since the onset of demonstrations, I have sought to advance inclusive and direct political dialogue and national reconciliation. I have offered our good offices, first as a means of relaying information between the demonstrators and the Government. I have expressed our approach as follows.

First, UNAMI is an impartial actor. We keep an equal distance from all sides. We offer our good offices, whether for mediation, convening, or witnessing, any negotiated agreement. However, secondly, UNAMI is not neutral on human rights. We have spoken up against the increasing use of sectarian language. We have advocated the principle of non-violence, including to the demonstrators. We have called on the Government to exercise the utmost restraint. Thirdly, UNAMI urges the Government to respond to those popular demands that can be addressed in the short term, and to do so immediately. Other demands will require more time for a response. The demonstrations have been under way for nearly three months. However, the mistrust among the components of Iraq — Shia, Sunni and Kurd and other communities — goes much deeper. The deep-seated lack of trust threatens the political fabric and the social bonds that should bring Iraqis together in one united, federal country on the basis of the Constitution.

Members of each and every ethnic and social group continue to be the target of acts of terrorism, assassination and kidnapping, including while practicing their faith. Terrorists seek to ignite sectarian conflict and turn the clock back on Iraq's nascent stability.

In total, acts of terrorism from November 2012 to the end of February 2013 claimed the lives of almost 1,300 civilians. More than 3,000 innocent Iraqis have been wounded. Furthermore, almost 600 Iraqi security forces have been killed and 1,000 injured as a result of those atrocious terrorist acts. I have condemned those acts in the strongest possible terms. I have called on all of Iraq's leaders and religious authorities to rise as one to stop the bloodshed.

Relations between the central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government continue to be strained. Kirkuk remains the flashpoint for Arab-Kurdish relations. On 16 January, for example, a series of attacks resulted in 26 deaths and the wounding of 190 other individuals.

The absence of President Talabani, who has had a truly stabilizing role in Iraq, is bitterly felt. I wish him a speedy recovery.

I strongly encourage talks to continue between the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga on the withdrawal and relocation of troops.

To bring about fruitful relations between the central and regional Governments, the passage of the revenue-sharing and hydrocarbon laws will be crucial. I call on the Parliament and the political blocs to reach a consensus on those laws without further delay. I wish to renew my offer of good offices to the parties, and call upon their goodwill. The sharing of the immense natural resources of Iraq in a fair and equitable way is a must, and a prerequisite to rebuilding the trust. We will continue to build trust no matter how difficult it is.

Iraq is set to hold provincial council elections in less than one month from today. On 19 March, the Cabinet in Iraq decided that the council elections in the Ninewa and Anbar provinces would be postponed by six months, with reference to the deteriorating security conditions in those locations. I have expressed my concern about that decision, as the citizens of those provinces are looking forward to those elections with great hope.

As the Independent High Electoral Commission is continuing the technical preparations for the elections in all 14 provinces, I have called on the Government and Electoral Commission to ensure that elections can take place as scheduled in a peaceful and secure environment. I wish to commend the leadership of the High Electoral Commission, in particular, Chairman Sarbast Rasheed, as well as the dedicated commissioners and staff of the Commission and polling stations, for their excellent work. They are often subject to considerable pressure. Unfortunately, and despite our efforts, there has been no consensus on passing the law on holding elections in Kirkuk province.

Iraq is committed to strengthening its relations with its neighbours. By doing so, it aims to fully take up its rightful place in the Arab world, the region and the international community. I have mentioned the progress achieved towards the normalization of relations between Iraq and Kuwait, including through

Iraq's positive steps towards fulfilling its remaining obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter. A major milestone in that process will be the completion of boundary maintenance work. The finalization of the removal of obstacles along the border, in particular the three houses in Umm Qasr, is a necessary step. Understandably, that step is sensitive and politically difficult for Iraq. However, it must be done by 31 March.

I also urge the Government of Iraq to accept the funds set aside with the United Nations for the compensation of Iraqi farmers pursuant to resolution 899 (1994). I sincerely hope that progress in that area will lead to consensus on further outstanding issues, including the file on missing Kuwaiti nationals and property. During my most recent visit to Kuwait on 5 March, I sensed a spirit of optimism within the Kuwaiti leadership. Therefore, it is with much anticipation that I welcome the upcoming visit of Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Baghdad in the near future.

In December, I visited Saudi Arabia. I sensed the potential for relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia to be strengthened in a number of fields, including a prisoner exchange based on the agreement reached between the two sides — it would be a noble gesture if an agreement could be reached before the holy month of Ramadan; the opening of a border crossing between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, with its 800 kilometre-long border; and the active and committed participation of both countries in a new regional initiative led by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) to combat sand and dust storms. I urge the two countries to build upon the recent visit of a high-level Iraqi delegation to Riyadh. The restoration of normal relations would benefit the two peoples, the two countries and the region.

More than a year has passed since UNAMI began its considerable efforts to facilitate the humanitarian transfer of the residents of Camp Ashraf to the temporary transit location of Camp Hurriya and their relocation to third countries. I wish to reiterate my best wishes today on the occasion of Nowruz, in particular to the residents of Camp Hurriya and Camp Ashraf.

The urgency of relocating residents outside of Iraq was underlined on 9 February, when an attack on Camp Hurriya killed eight residents and injured an additional 40 persons. The Secretary-General, I and others have condemned that attack in no uncertain terms. I have fully supported requests made at the highest levels of the Government of Iraq to improve security at Camp Hurriya. The Government remains responsible for the safety and security of the residents in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the United Nations on 25 December 2011. The Government has assured me that it will spare no effort in preventing further attacks.

We face two major problems. First, the only durable solution is to relocate the residents outside of Iraq. I visited Albania on 15 March for talks with Prime Minister Berisha. I welcome the decision by the Government of Albania to accept 210 residents as early as next month. I sincerely thank the Albanian Government for that humanitarian gesture. Albania is thus the first country to accept a large number of residents. I urge other Member States to take similar steps. Yet, despite additional offers being made, the residents of Camp Hurriya continue to boycott relocation interviews with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I join the Secretary-General in urging the residents to fully cooperate with UNHCR. Offers must be accepted.

Secondly, there are 100 residents remaining at Camp Ashraf who refuse to join the larger group at Camp Hurriya until the completion of property negotiations. I encourage both the Government of Iraq and the residents to constructively engage with one another to promptly resolve the matter. I urge the residents to designate lawyers for that purpose.

Finally, I also appeal to the camp leadership not to prevent residents who wish to leave the camp from doing so, to cooperate with the Iraqi authorities when it comes to medical treatment, and to abstain from aggressive behaviour against our United Nations monitors. United Nations monitors must be able to freely interact with the residents of Camp Hurriya.

I would like to thank Member States, in particular the United States, and the European Union for their financial contributions and their support for the efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution of the issue of Camp Ashraf and Camp Hurriya. I also wish, in the meantime, to recognize the hard work of 136 United Nations staff members, including 60 security personnel, who are actively working on the file.

Having spoken at length about the group of 3,200 members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq in Iraq, I would like to note that our far larger humanitarian effort is focused

on three groups: Syrian refugees, returnees from Syria and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Iraq currently hosts nearly 120,000 Syrian nationals who have fled to Iraq seeking safety and humanitarian assistance. Most of the Syrian refugee population is currently located in the Kurdistan region. An average of 800 individuals enters the country every day. UNHCR is leading the humanitarian country team in conducting a massive emergency operation to respond to the refugees' humanitarian needs. That operation will support the Government of Iraq in ensuring that the refugees are protected and assisted.

I would like to commend the Government of Iraq for the generosity and hospitality it has shown to the individuals and families seeking safety and security in Iraq. I call on the Government to extend its generosity by reopening the Al-Qaim and Rabia border crossing points. I also appeal to all Member States to urgently step up their contributions to the refugee response plan, which still requires funding beyond June 2013.

In addition, approximately 80,000 Iraqis have fled Syria to return to Iraq in the past few months. They fall into the larger group of 1.2 million internally displaced persons. Both returnees and IDPs are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The majority of those persons live in informal settlements and constantly face the threat of eviction. Those settlements are in appalling condition. Returnees and the displaced lack access to basic services, proper public health facilities and schools. I call on the Government to increase the amount and speed of delivery of assistance it provides to Iraqi returnees from Syria. I also call on the Government to ensure the swift reintegration of Iraqi returnees.

I would like to turn now to the broader human rights situation in Iraq, and specifically the administration of justice. That is an area that continues to be of concern. Many detainees continue to complain of abuse, mistreatment and torture, in particular in prisons under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. Every case of torture is one case too many. Confessions under duress are unacceptable. Courts continue to be underresourced, which causes long delays in processing cases, often beyond lawful limits. I wish to reiterate the Secretary-General's call on Iraq to consider a moratorium on all executions in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. Respect for the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities also remains inconsistent. Those groups face discrimination and other social, cultural and legal barriers to their full participation in the economic, social and political life of Iraq.

Despite the problems noted, Iraq is making progress in establishing the High Commission for Human Rights, with the active support of the Government of Iraq and the assistance of the United Nations. The Commission will serve as a cornerstone of an Iraqi-owned and -led system to guarantee the protection, respect and promotion of the human rights of all of Iraq's citizens in future.

On matters related to the environment, dust storms have increasingly become a major problem for the Iraqi people and the region. The dust storms in the region are mainly generated in Iraq. From airports to agricultural lands, dust storms extract a heavy annual economic toll amounting to billions. Dust storms also place significant strain on public health. Hospitals are overwhelmed with persons requiring treatment for respiratory conditions caused by dust.

Last month, I joined the environment ministers of regional Governments at a meeting in Nairobi hosted by UNEP. We established a clear political agreement on the need to address the issue of sand and dust storms. UNEP will lead in the creation of a regional programme, in partnership with Governments, the private sector and civil society. A trust fund has been established for that effort, and I appeal to Member States, especially those affected by dust storms in the region, to contribute resources.

I also welcome the initiative of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to host the next regional meeting to discuss further concrete steps.

As in all my previous briefings to the Council, I would like to conclude by touching on the urgent problems facing the youth of Iraq. After the devastating effect of war, and caught amid a soaring political crisis, Iraq's youth are largely left to fend for themselves. Youth unemployment stands at 23 per cent.

I have made young people a priority because, with their potential and passion, they are the future of Iraq. They will carry forward efforts towards the stability, security and prosperity that all Iraqis seek to build. I very much welcome the Government's efforts to work towards a youth agenda. With the support of the United Nations Population Fund, a national youth strategy will be launched in the second quarter of 2013.

In February, I visited three different holy places in Baghdad with 30 young Iraqis of different faiths and backgrounds. Together we sat in shrines, churches and temples in order to discuss what unites us, along with our differences. I saw first-hand that reconciliation in Iraq can truly begin with the young.

UNAMI will continue to provide a platform for young people to express themselves, be empowered and vocalize the actions that will build their country.

In closing, I am reminded that the Iraqi people are blessed with three important assets: a rich and ancient culture; a vibrant young population; and natural wealth. I hope that Iraq will remain determined and steadfast in this very challenging time and take advantage of this rich endowment to further advance the country.

With the support of Member States, UNAMI will continue to assist the people and the Government of Iraq in its mandated tasks. I wish to thank the Government of Iraq for its cooperation during 2013, as in previous years.

I wish to place on record my deep thanks to the Security Council for its continued support.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Kobler for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you and your country on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to extend my thanks to the previous President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, for his efforts during the month of February. I also would like to thank Mr. Martin Kobler, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, and his team in Baghdad and New York for their commitment, dedication and tireless efforts to assist the Government and the people of Iraq.

Since we are celebrating the day of Nawrooz, I would like to congratulate our Kurdish people in Iraq, who are celebrating the year 2713, and the Assyrian Christian Iraqis, who are celebrating the year 6763. I convey my best wishes to all nations that celebrate Nawrooz. As Mr. Kobler mentioned, we have a very ancient culture, which is obvious from the year being celebrated by the Assyrian community — around 7,000 years.

Having reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/2013/154), I would like to make the following comments.

At the political and security levels, Iraq is witnessing a political stalemate and an exchange of accusations among some of the political blocs, while protests are continuing in a number of cities that are making a number of legitimate demands. The most notable demands are for the adoption of the general amnesty law, the abolition of the Justice and Accountability Law, which replaced the de-baathification law, and the release of detainees, especially women. Other demands were added later, such as abolishing the Constitution and toppling the Government. The preliminary objectives of the demonstrations deviated from the path of popular demand when the demonstrators were infiltrated by certain extremist groups aiming to stir up sectarian tensions and foment civil war.

The foreign and regional players that hijacked the legitimate demands of citizens were exposed when the flag of the Free Syrian Army and portraits of foreign officers were displayed during the demonstrations. Proof of that is the support of Al-Qaida terrorist groups and the leadership of the Baath party. Izzat al-Douri, who was Vice-President during the Saddam regime, appeared on television for the first time since 2003 to announce his support for the demonstrations.

The Iraqi Government declared that the demands of the protesters should be considered and that it differentiates between legitimate and illegitimate demands based on the Constitution. Continuous governmental and parliamentarian efforts are therefore under way to respond to those demands.

On 9 January 2013, the Iraqi Council of Ministers decided to form a ministerial-level committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Hussein Al-Shahristani, and the membership of the ministries of justice, defence, human rights, municipalities and water resources, as well as the State Minister for Parliamentarian Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, in addition to the Deputy Minister of the Interior, to receive the legitimate demands of the demonstrators through delegations representing them.

The committee was commissioned to study the demands and to make its recommendations to the Council of Ministers. Upon the recommendations of the committee, the Council of Ministers approved

the following actions: extending the deadline for those subject to the Justice and Accountability Law to submit requests for a return to service or retirement; processing pension applications for all persons subjects to the Justice and Accountability Law, except Fedayeen Saddam, Saddam commandos and members of the highest two ranks of the Baath party; authorizing the real estate registration department to accept applications to lift the freeze on the properties of officials of the former regime; activating item 12 of the Justice and Accountability Law by giving orders to ministries to accept applications for exemptions to that law in order to submit them to the Council of Ministers and the Council of Representatives for approval; requesting the High Judicial Council to authorize judges to activate the legal process for detained women in order to facilitate their release, except in cases where prohibited by law; requesting the Ministry of Justice to immediately implement release orders, and not to wait for the approval of any other authority.

On 29 January, the Council of Ministers approved the increase in the salaries of the members of the Awakening Councils, who are mostly in the western part of Iraq, to at least 500,000 Iraqi dinars a month, authorizing the Ministry of Defence to give bonuses to interrogation officers to speed up the process of releasing the detainees. Those executive procedures led to the realization of the legitimate demands of the demonstrators, including the release of around 5,500 detainees — though I would note that Mr. Kobler said 3,500 — including most of the women; the return to service of hundreds of officers from the former Iraqi army; the completion of more than 91,000 pension applications; and the lifting of the ban on 1,800 properties that belong to members of the former Baath regime.

With regard to sectarian slogans and calls to cancel the Constitution, the Ministry of the Interior has warned that the language of sectarian incitement is considered a direct threat to the security of the nation and its people. Such language lays the foundation for a culture of hatred and the rejection of others and promotes sectarianism under the pretext of defending the rights of a certain sect. Such language, together with sectarian motives, is also responsible for the indiscriminate violence. The Ministry has pointed out that it is condemned by the Iraqi Constitution and completely contradicts the current regulations and laws. It has warned citizens not to listen to the advocates of sectarian strife. The Ministry has also said that, on the basis of its executive responsibility, it will decisively address such attempts to destroy the unity of the county and act against such voices, in line with its mandate under the law and the Constitution, regardless of their title, social, religious or political positions.

Despite that worrying situation, most demonstrations are still peaceful, as witnessed by UNAMI during its visit to Al-Anbar province in February. Like many countries that have emerged from a dictatorship, Iraq is going through a democratic transition phase that will be characterized by instability until the democratic institutions gain strength and competitive political work runs smoothly and peacefully within the framework of the Constitution.

Over the past years, Iraq suffered several crises that finally led to a peaceful solution and positive results, such as the adoption of the Constitution, the holding of elections, the formation of the Government and the adoption of budgets. Such crises and other examples polarized the Iraqi political currents and led to long-lasting tensions. However, they ultimately followed their course and did not hinder the political process indefinitely. In other words, the struggle in Iraq moved from an armed conflict to gain power to a peaceful conflict within the framework of the Constitution and the law, as I have described in the past by saying that Iraqis have learned to shout rather than to shoot at each other.

The Prime Minister has explained his view of current events in the region and their impact on the internal situation in Iraq by stressing the adherence of Iraqis to their unity and their rejection of violence, extremism and sectarianism. We have warned several times against the spillover of the Syrian conflict, which could cause instability in the whole region. That has been echoed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, when, on several occasions, he has warned about the repercussions of the Syrian conflict on neighbouring countries.

The killing of Syrian soldiers after they had surrendered to the Iraqi authorities by armed terrorists, who crossed from Syria to Al-Anbar province on 4 March, is the best proof of a link between the armed groups across the border and the impact of the Syrian conflict on the stability of the region. The Al-Qaida terrorist group announced its responsibility for the

murder of those soldiers in collaboration with the Al-Nusra Front terrorist group in Syria.

Some areas inside Iraq are still witnessing acts of violence, while others are enjoying a good level of security. Iraqi citizens are still subject to violence from terrorism, but less so than in 2011 and certainly less than the peak of sectarian violence in 2006 and 2007. There is a fear of the possibility of an increase in violence in the next few months as a result of the regional situation and if the current political crisis is not resolved.

Although the Iraqi security forces are combating terrorist activities, many rebel groups, including Al-Qaida, are still active in parts of Iraq. The situation is still critical in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, Al-Anbar and other provinces. The Iraqi Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, condemned the attack on Camp Liberty on 9 February. It immediately launched an investigation to find out the perpetrators and bring them to justice and to reaffirm its resolve to take the necessary measurements to ensure the security and safety of the inhabitants of the camp.

Other committees, including the Al-Ja'afari committee, which was responsible for some political dialogue, are still conducting talks with all political groups in order to try and solve the problems between all factions and to reach a consensus among Iraqi political groups and the coalition. One positive point in the political process is that the Independent High Electoral Commission has affirmed that it is moving forward with its timetable to hold the provincial council elections, which are scheduled for 20 April. The Commission is working despite the challenges to complete a special programme for the elections, in line with international standards, in collaboration with the International Electoral Assistance Team and UNAMI. The Commission finalized the approval of political entities and coalitions and has received the names of candidates in the provinces. The Commission is working on the last stage of completing the procedures for hiring polling-station employees and is finalizing all logistical matters and the printing of ballot papers.

At the economic level, Iraq has succeeded in curbing inflation, achieving economic growth and increasing its oil exports. Iraq has achieved significant progress in development, according to the recent World Bank report, entitled Country Partnership Strategy for Iraq 2013-2016.

In 2013, the Iraqi Government has focused on policies to support the private sector, to create job opportunities for its citizens and to stimulate economic development. As a result of Iraq's plan to increase its oil production, at the end of 2012, the country reached second place among oil-exporting countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, after Saudi Arabia, and now stands at its highest average in the past 30 years.

In 2012, the Iraqi economy grew by about 10 per cent for the second consecutive year. The International Monetary Fund expects the Iraqi economy to grow by 13.5 per cent in 2013, which would make it one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The Iraq Government is trying to diversify the economy and to create new job opportunities for Iraq's workforce.

The Government budget for 2013 amounts to approximately $118.3 billion, with an increase of 18 per cent compared to 2012. That makes it the largest budget in Iraq's history. The budget allocates 29.5 per cent to energy, 19.7 per cent to security, 17.7 per cent to social services, 12.8 per cent to education and 6.8 per cent to health care. The investment portion of this year's budget is approximately 40 per cent, which is larger than in any previous budget.

The thirty-ninth Baghdad International Fair was opened by the Prime Minister of Iraq in November 2012, with the participation of 1,440 foreign companies from all over the world. Bilateral agreements were signed with participating countries and companies aimed at expanding trade relations. In December 2012, Iraq ratified a framework agreement for trade and investment with the United States as a first step towards expanding trade and investment between the two countries.

The European Parliament has ratified a partnership and cooperation agreement between the Republic of Iraq and the European Union. In addition, Iraq's membership was accepted by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative on 12 December 2012 after it had completed all the necessary requirements and procedures. That step was part of Iraq's efforts to enhance the company working environment in the extractive industries.

Iraq is working to attract investment for reconstruction after years of neglect due to years of wars and sanctions. According to a report published in May 2012, foreign companies have invested more than $55 billion in investment projects, service contracts

and other activities throughout Iraq. Direct foreign investment reached about $2 billion from being almost nothing a decade ago. Such amounts do not include the tens of billions of dollars of investment in the energy sector.

Within the framework of infrastructure projects, $5 billion were allocated to building housing projects in all parts of Iraq according to the population percentage. Several projects have been inaugurated, including the Al Saedia project in Baghdad in late November 2012. The foundation was laid for the third Khaldon housing project for families of martyrs in Basra in mid-February. In Najaf, another project is under construction that contains 1,100 apartments. It will be supplied by clean electricity through solar panels and will include a medical clinic, schools and kindergartens.

With regard to adopting communication solutions and technology to support social and economic development, the percentage of cell phone users in Iraq has now reached 80 per cent, and will rise to 93 per cent in 2015. According to statements made available by four Internet and telephone service providers, more than 5 million Iraqis use the Internet, and Iraq has more than 25 million cell phone users.

At the regional and international levels, Iraq is continuing to develop its relations with all countries of the region, especially the State of Kuwait. Iraq is making efforts to support the moderate current in the region, encouraging dialogue and steering the region away from the danger of regional interventions.

With regared to the Kuwaiti issue, the dispute was ended and a final settlement reached on the matter of Iraqi Airways versus the State of Kuwait through the signing of an agreement between the two sides and Iraq's payment of $500 million. On 29 January, the Iraqi Council of Ministers ratified the draft law on the agreement concerning navigation in the Khor Abdallah waterway. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoyshar Zebari visited the State of Kuwait on 27 February aboard the first Iraqi Airways aeroplane to fly to Kuwait in 23 years. A joint technical team is currently working on the border pillars maintenance project. It expects to finish its work by the end of this month, bringing to a close one of the most important issues between the two countries. That would pave the way to bilateral relations based on mutual respect and common interests, as well as for Iraq's exit from its Chapter VII status.

In the context of Iraq's regaining its international status, with a view to building on the successful holding of several conferences in 2012, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki opened the twenty-ninth session of the Arab Council of Ministers of Housing and Construction in Baghdad on 18 December 2012.

That same month, Baghdad hosted a conference on Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli prisons, with the participation of 70 countries. The conference concluded with the Baghdad declaration and recommended the acceptance of Iraq's proposal to establish a fund to support Palestinian and Arab prisoners and their families. The Government of Iraq made an initial $2 million contribution to the fund.

During its presidency of the League of Arab States Summit, Iraq proposed holding the first Arab conference on legal and national awareness, which was opened in Baghdad on 10 March. The aim was to develop and consolidate legal and national awareness of the concept of citizenship and an awareness that human rights will generate affiliation, interdependence and integration into the melting pot of society. Citizenship is a right of every citizen in society, regardless of racial, religious or sectarian affiliation. Violations of human rights open the door to wars.

At the international level, Iraq participated in the seventeenth Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which was held in The Hague from 26 to 30 December 2012. Iraq was elected as a Vice-President of the Conference, as well as a member of the credentials committee. That affirmed Iraq's commitment to supporting international efforts to achieve a world free from chemical weapons and to ensure international peace and security.

Foreign Minister Zebari participated in the Munich Security Conference that opened on 1 February. The Conference discussed the most important international policy issues and security and economic problems at the regional and international levels, including their implications and ways to face them.

The Foreign Minister also participated in the ministerial-level meeting of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum, held in Moscow on 20 February.

The Prime Minister chaired the Iraqi delegation participating in the twelfth Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Cairo on 8 February.

Building on Iraq's role in efforts to resolve the Syrian problem peacefully and to support the humanitarian situation in that country, Iraq participated in the donors conference held in Kuwait. It is worth mentioning that Iraq is sheltering approximately 100,000 Syrian refugees, as Mr. Kobler mentioned, spread over the cities of Iraqi Kurdistan, Anbar province and other provinces. During her visit to New York, I asked Christine McNab, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, about the status of Syrian refugee camps in Iraq, and she answered that she had visited them and that they were good.

On 26 February, our Foreign Minister welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium to discuss the improvement of bilateral relations and cooperation in combating extremism and terrorism. The visit resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding on political and diplomatic cooperation between the ministries for foreign affairs of the our countries.

On 4 March, the Prime Minister welcomed his counterpart from the Arab Republic of Egypt. Both sides held talks to coordinate political positions and discussed cooperation and trade relations between the two countries at the regional level.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of the support of the members of the Security Council in assisting Iraq in emerging from its Chapter VII status and from the sanctions that were imposed on it due to Saddam's crime of invading Kuwait, which forced the Security Council to adopt sanctions resolutions and to consider Iraq a threat to international peace and security. Iraq today is different from Iraq before 2003, as the Secretary-General stated in his report to the Security Council (S/2013/154). Iraq must regain the status it enjoyed before 1990.

Before I conclude my speech, I would like to mention a few points that Mr. Kobler addressed in his statement. I think that resuming relations with Saudi Arabia is a very important step forward, and the exchange of prisoners between Iraq and Saudi Arabia is opening the door to that, as is the opening of the borders, which is also a good step forward.

With regard to reopening the border checkpoints between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, we have had several problems in the past. The most recent one was when Syrian soldiers closed the borders after a fight started between the Syrian regular army and the Syrian Free Army, and Iraq wanted to send those soldiers back from a different checkpoint. So they took them from Mosul to Anbar to send them back to Syria, when they were ambushed and killed. All of them, almost 40 Syrian soldiers and 20 Iraqi soldiers, were killed.

On torture, the Constitution and the law in Iraq forbid torture. However, we do not deny that there are some police officers who are guilty of misconduct, as in any other country in the world. But many officers have been dismissed, and some of them were brought to justice and legal action was taken against them when cases of torture were proved.

I commend Mr. Kobler for his tireless efforts to resettle the inhabitants of Camp Ashraf and Camp Hurriya. I personally commend him for his efforts to convince Albania to accept 210 of them. That is a good start. I encourage other members of the Security Council to accept more camp residents. The only solution to the problem is to resettle these people in other countries.

With respect to the youth problem, I think that the Government realizes how important the problem in Iraq. I encourage the Government to have a plan. By way of example, the Iraqi Mission to the United Nations has trained Iraqi youth. We have Iraqis who have come from different parts of the world, some from as far away as Australia. I have also given internships to other students in order to encourage youth and provide them an opportunity for internships in order to have a better future. They are from different nationalities and from all over the world, but the majority of them are studying in American universities.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6938

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6938th meeting
Thursday, 21 March 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Shin Dong Ik
	Rwanda	Mr. Kayinamura
	Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2013/140)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

13-26641 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2013/140)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Hilde Johnson, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/140, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council today. I would like to briefly revisit the main elements of the report of the Secretary-General before the Council today (S/2013/140) and then focus my remarks on the most recent operational developments, as well as key political considerations related to mandate implementation.

Since my last briefing to the Council by videoconference on 28 November last year, South Sudan's transition towards a stable, viable State continued at an uneven pace. During the period covered by the report, South Sudan continued to face multiple challenges, while progress was achieved in some areas.

Relations with the Sudan remained tense, although the 8, 12 and 19 March agreements on the implementation of the 27 September Cooperation Agreements could significantly improve the situation in the coming months. An easing of some of the economic austerity measures, with a restart of oil production, would definitely help create an environment conducive to progress on other crucial political and security issues. Internal security challenges, in particular intercommunal violence in several areas and the activities of armed groups in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states, continue to be a source of instability and pose grave threats to the civilian population. Land disputes also remain a potential source of insecurity in the country.

Recent spates of violence in Jonglei and Western Bahr el-Ghazal states have further highlighted the importance of the protection of civilians mandate assigned to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). In Western Bahr el-Ghazal, some 5,000 civilians fleeing from intercommunal violence in Wau, in December, sought refuge in the UNMISS camp. Similarly, in Pibor county, Jonglei state, hundreds of civilians sought protection in UNMISS bases on many occasions when there were clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and armed groups. The largest numbers were around 3,000 on 27 January and 1,800 on 6 March. It is important to note that, while the Pibor County Commissioner had designated a safe area where he said the SPLA would protect civilians, the population chose to come to the two UNMISS bases in the town. We have just received a message today about a similar message in Gumuruk, south of Pibor, where civilians also sought refuge with our contingents.

The situation in Jonglei state remains a source of major concern and presents complex challenges for both UNMISS and the Government. The Government remains committed to finding a peaceful solution to the threat posed by David Yau Yau's armed group, but has made it clear that the window for dialogue is closing and that military operations may soon be launched. Although the Government is committed to doign its utmost to protect civilians during such operations, the civilian population can be at risk from being caught in the crossfire. We have stressed that any military response to insecurity must secure the protection of civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

Another source of concern is the intercommunal tension created by the 8 February deadly attack on a Lou Nuer community in the Walgak area, which was migrating to a dry season grazing area. The deadly attack, allegedly perpetrated by armed youth from the Murle community, resulted in the killing of over 100 civilians and a number of escorting SPLA troops. Local

and political leaders, including the Vice-President and several ministers who visited the area, have been engaged in efforts to convince the Lou Nuer youth not to resort to revenge attacks but to allow the SPLA and the police to address the problem. In the meantime, UNMISS has conducted a human rights investigation into the Wangar attack. A report into its findings will be published later this month.

UNMISS has developed contingency plans for possible Jonglei state scenarios. The Mission has strengthened its troop presence and increased the number of integrated civilian-military patrols to identify the locations of potential attacks, and continues to engage the vulnerable communities and support efforts to find a peaceful solution. We also continue to urge the Government to address the root causes of violence and chronic instability in the State.

In relation to the violence that broke out in Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, in December, a number of disturbing arbitrary detentions were registered. I have raised this concern with national and state authorities and urged that due process be respected. All perpetrators should be held to account. I have also called for intercommunal reconciliation.

Increased reports of threats to freedom of expression and respect for human rights in South Sudan are worrying. We have impressed upon the Government that it must take immediate steps to reverse this trend and have pressed for the investigation into the December 2012 killing of the columnist Isaiah Abraham to be expedited and the perpetrators to be brought to justice. On a positive note, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting has committed to the United Nations plan of action for freedom of expression and the protection of journalists — initiated by UNESCO and supported by UNMISS and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights — and has agreed to seek the Council of Ministers' approval for South Sudan to become a pilot country.

While investigating the case of a South Sudanese journalist under threat, two UNMISS human rights officers were held and interrogated for several hours in January. UNMISS immediately protested at the highest levels, and measures are now being worked out between UNMISS and the relevant security institutions to prevent a recurrence of such incidents. President Salva Kiir Mayardit has also pledged that he will take action against undisciplined elements within the security organs.

Another welcome development is the establishment by the Government of a high-level panel to address the problem of arbitrary/prolonged detention. The panel is chaired by the Chief Justice, and includes the SPLA and the Ministers of Justice, National Security, the Interior and Defence. Also positively, South Sudan recently signed the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, but the Government should now fulfil its commitment to the accession and ratification of this and other key human rights instruments.

The persistent violence and instability in South Sudan are deeply rooted. Historical animosities among communities, dating from the civil, and old divisions and power struggles among political protagonists are pervasive. New tensions are emerging from old wounds. These all need to be addressed. Hence, the Government's initiative to launch a process of national reconciliation and healing is welcomed. It is essential, however, that this important process be inclusive and broadly owned by all stakeholders. To this end, the United Nations system is working closely with all stakeholders in supporting the preparations for the reconciliation process.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains challenging. There is a constant stream of refugees arriving in South Sudan from Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile in the Sudan, with over 14,000 new arrivals thus far in 2013. Meanwhile, humanitarian actors have continued to report access issues, the presence of weapons in the camps, and other impediments to their work. The proliferation of weapons caused clashes between the police and armed elements in Yida refugee camp on 17 March. Returnees from the Sudan continue to face difficulties with sustainable reintegration, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

Despite these many challenges, South Sudan continues to lay the foundations for a viable and democratic State. Progress has been made, and let me go through a few key areas.

The democratic foundations of this new and independent country have been established with a proper legal framework for multiparty democracy and elections and concomitant functioning institutions. The work on reviewing the Transitional Constitution is now also gaining momentum. On 26 February, the National Legislative Assembly approved an amendment to the

Transitional Constitution that extended the mandate of the National Constitutional Review Commission by two years. The extension will ensure that the Commission has sufficient time to conduct broad nationwide consultations down to the county level, and implement its mandate.

Police reform has continued through implementing the action plan and scaling up the training of police at all levels. The registration of all police personnel, which should greatly facilitate the right-sizing, training and transformation of the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), is now complete. To date, the provisional number of registered police personnel stands at 46,427, after the rescreening that revised earlier figures. The SSNPS is now reconciling the registered figures with the payroll for each State in order to weed out ghost police officers.

Furthermore, in support of reform of the security sector, reshuffle has taken place in the SPLA and the SSNPS, replacing a number of senior military and police officers with younger officers. This is part of an overall modernization and professionalization effort. UNMISS continues to provide training to the SSNPS and has developed proposals for contributing to the development of the capacity of the SPLA to protect civilians. In January, countrywide consultations on the draft national security policy were launched by the Government. UNMISS is working with international partners to provide technical and logistical support to this process.

Meanwhile, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission Council has been established and a pilot disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme is set to be launched at Mapel on 15 April. With progress on disengagement from the border areas, it is hoped that DDR and security sector reform will gather momentum. The National Legislative Assembly has become more assertive in carrying out its role with stronger checks and balances, and more actively performing its oversight functions, including its handling of audit reports and budgets and the passage of critical legislation in a number of key areas.

In the continued context of austerity, the Government has taken positive steps to stabilize the country's macroeconomic situation, with reductions in average monthly Government spending by more than 50 per cent. Non-oil revenues increased 10-fold, to about 70 million South Sudanese pounds per month.

However, a large fiscal gap still remains and, pending the resumption of oil flows, a multifaceted donor support package will be required to bridge it. A donors conference to address those issues is scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C., on 16 and 17 April. Even with the full and timely implementation of the agreement on oil, the conference is very important. I ask the Council to lend its full support to the success of the conference.

I regret to inform members that, since my last briefing to the Council, the United Nations operating environment has become more challenging due to a number of grave violations of the status-of-forces agreement by the Government. We are addressing the problem through interventions at the highest levels. We are also launching a sensitization and training programme for all security institutions.

As members are aware, the most egregious violation occurred on 21 December, when SPLA forces shot down an UNMISS helicopter, killing four Russian crew members. We have engaged the Government on the matter at the highest levels to urge a swift and transparent investigation. We have been coordinating closely with the Russian aviation company concerned and with civil aviation authorities to facilitate the investigations in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization rules. We have also regularly updated the Russian Embassy in Uganda on the investigation process. The Russian Ambassador has expressed his Government's appreciation to UNMISS for its efforts in that regard.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that in both resolutions 1996 (2011) and 2057 (2012), the Security Council determined that the situation faced by South Sudan continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region. That not only refers to the situation between South Sudan and the Sudan. With five other neighbours, the continuing proliferation of weapons in South Sudan has serious implications for regional security and stability. That continues among not only armed militia groups, but also civilian communities in South Sudan that feel vulnerable. Furthermore, South Sudan remains afflicted by internal security and political fault lines, which continue to render the country fragile and which has potential spillover effects. Every effort to mitigate that risk and to

keep South Sudan on a path to stability and prosperity will contribute to the stability of the whole region.

The international community's continued support is needed more than ever. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council for its support and its valuable contribution to the work of UNMISS.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Johnson for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. D'Awol (South Sudan): Allow me, at the outset, to thank you and your country, Mr. President, for the good work done during your presidency of the Security Council this month. I wish you success in discharging your responsibilities. Similarly, we would like to extend our profound gratitude to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative, Ms. Hilde Johnson, for their continued support and commitment to the Government and the people of the South Sudan through the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). We also welcome this opportunity to share our views with the members of the Security Council and to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/140). We also thank all the States Members of the United Nations, including members of the Council, for the contribution of troops, civilian personnel and equipment to the Mission.

As the Secretary-General underlines in his report, South Sudan has continued to build its national institutions and to make meaningful progress on several fronts, despite experiencing a considerable number of internal and external challenges.

The extension of the mandate of the National Constitutional Review Commission will allow for meaningful participation by the largest number of our citizens in the constitutional review process. That is a critical ingredient for effective peacebuilding. We would also like to inform the Council that the Government has begun the necessary planning for the 2014 census and the 2015 elections. We welcome the logistical and technical support that UNMISS will provide for those endeavours.

The Secretary-General also makes reference in his report to President Kiir's recent decisions with regard to the leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the South Sudan National Police Service. Those changes are part of our Government's efforts to engage in serious security sector reform. We welcome the continued support of the international community for that process.

The Government maintains its policy of seeking peace with rebel militias, as a result of which many groups have over the years been successfully absorbed into the SPLA. The Government still faces a threat from a group loyal to David Yau Yau, who, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, has attacked civilians in Jonglei, as well as SPLA positions. An amnesty offer nonetheless remains on the table. Through its support to Murle leaders for their engagement with Murle youths, the Government has invested tremendous energy in pursuit of peace in Jonglei. We would like to express our appreciation to UNMISS for its extensive support for those efforts. There are no easy or immediate solutions in Jonglei. Disarmament alone will not resolve the underlying issues of traditional perceptions and practices among the various traditional communities in those areas.

We recognize that an inclusive, long-term national reconciliation process is sorely needed, and the Government has committed resources to it. The Government welcomes and encourages the continued support of the humanitarian and non-governmental-organization community, both for peacebuilding efforts and for new initiatives aimed at addressing those underlying issues.

With regard to the regrettable incidents of inter-communal violence in Western Bahr el-Ghazal state, the Government of the Republic of South Sudan is completely committed to a process of full accountability. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, steps have been taken to ensure due process for all detainees. UNMISS has also been granted access to detainees in Wau county.

My Government once again expresses its profound regret for the shooting down of an UNMISS helicopter in December 2012. President Kiir reiterates the Government's apologies and condolences to the Government and people of the Russian Federation, as well as to the families of those killed. We expect to complete our investigations into the matter in a timely fashion, and will fully cooperate with the United Nations Secretariat Board of Inquiry. The Republic of South Sudan remains fully committed to guaranteeing the safety, security and unrestricted freedom of movement of United Nations personnel in the country.

We welcome the proposal of UNMISS to engage in the sensitization and training of all security organs on the UNMISS mandate, the status of forces agreement, the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel and South Sudan's obligations under international law.

It is no secret that the relations between South Sudan and the Sudan have not been satisfactory, despite the fact that the Government of South Sudan has shown flexibility in the post-independence negotiations in Addis Ababa. On 12 March, however, the two countries adopted the implementation matrix in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan. The matrix contains a clear road map for the implementation of the previous agreements signed. Importantly, a measurable breakthrough with regard to security arrangements has been taken place. The two parties agreed to withdraw their troops unconditionally to their respective sides of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. The President of the Republic of South Sudan has already issued an order instructing the army's general chief of staff to immediately draw troops away from the buffer zone. Indeed, as I speak now, our armed forces have started moving to the designated areas away from the buffer zone.

On the issue of the determination of the final status of Abyei and the consideration of establishing the Abyei Referendum Commission, the two parties agreed that the matter should be dealt with at the level of the Presidents of the two countries, South Sudan and the Sudan. It is our sincere hope that the long-suffering people of Abyei will at last have their problems resolved and promptly be able to exercise their right of self-determination.

As the world's youngest nation, South Sudan still faces many challenges. The first 18 months of independence have not always been easy. Developing the structures of Government, establishing State authority and enforcing the rule of law is not the work of one year or even of five years; it is a long-term process. Since the independence of the Republic of South Sudan from the Sudan, our nascent State has confronted enormous tasks of nation-building and development. We concur with the Secretary-General's calls that urge our development partners to provide the prerequisite peacebuilding support for the efforts being undertaken to stabilize the conflict-prone tri-state area of Unity, Warrap and Lakes states. Significant investment by other parties and continued support by UNMISS are required in assisting the Government to project its authority and to develop its capacity to govern those volatile areas.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/72)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and I request the Chief of Protocol to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I also welcome the presence in the Chamber of His Excellency Mr. Ivan Mrkić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/72, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: The report before the Council (S/2013/72) details the key events and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that occurred between 16 October 2012 and 15 January 2013.

Since I last addressed the Council, on 27 November (S/PV.6872), we have seen some important positive developments, thanks to the direct Belgrade-Pristina engagement in the high-level political dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). Since October, Prime Ministers Ivica Dačić and Hashim Thaçi, who are present in the Chamber today, have met for a total of seven rounds of dialogue in Brussels. In addition, Presidents Tomislav Nikolić and Atifete Jahjaga met for the first time on 6 February as part of that same process, signaling the full political engagement of both sides. Together, these meetings have marked an essential — indeed, historic — new chapter in the collective effort to overcome the legacy of the past conflict. The leaders involved have demonstrated political courage as well as foresight by their participation, and they deserve strong recognition for having embarked on such a difficult yet indispensable process.

Progress has emerged from these meetings, in particular the most recent, the last of which took place only two days ago. Accordingly, I am very pleased that today the Council has the opportunity to take stock of the achievements made so far. Detailed discussions on the further implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points have addressed more complex questions, such as the management of fees and duties at those points. The parties' liaison officers are expected to begin work soon within the European Commission offices in Belgrade and Pristina.

More recently, discussions have shifted to addressing the matter of Serbian institutions operating within Kosovo, as well as a range of difficult issues specific to the situation of northern Kosovo. It is my hope that the parties will remain steadfast in their determination to reach acceptable compromises on such highly sensitive issues, and find viable solutions that can better serve the interests and aspirations of all communities living in Kosovo.

During this period of encouraging political progress, there have also been significant challenges to face on the ground, including adverse security incidents and frequent instances of inflammatory rhetoric and posturing from various quarters. The latter have not only put unhelpful strains on the atmosphere around the political process, but in some cases have also threatened efforts to ensure that agreements are translated into practice. In the face of such developments, we have joined others in continuing to urge both sides not simply to remain committed to the dialogue, but also to exert

more active leadership in order to temper the emotions and reactions of their constituencies.

In that light, I wish to stress today that if this vital political engagement is to fulfil its maximum potential, it needs to be accompanied by strenuous, constant and coherent work on the ground on the part of both the mandated international presences and local leaders. For its part, UNMIK continues to implement a broad-based strategic review of all its activities and to enhance functional coordination with its international partners. Our goal is to help ensure that the political process is reflected in the realities we face daily in Kosovo as much as it is reflective of them.

I wish now to briefly highlight some key ongoing issues, where continued attention and action must accompany and complement he steps being taken by those directly engaged in the political dialogue.

There have been episodes of increased tension in northern Kosovo both during the reporting period and in the two months since. Some of these have been motivated, at least in part, by local confusion and misunderstanding about the substance of the political talks in Brussels. Unfortunately, that uncertainty was aggravated at times by very ill-considered statements from some local leaders. We and our partners continue to urge Belgrade and Pristina to significantly enhance their communication with the population living in the north. At the same time, we are urging local political leaders to act more responsibly, in a manner that will help to protect the long-term interests of their constituencies. With all interlocutors, we have stressed how important it is that they base their public assessments strictly on reliable information and renounce the chronic practices of inflammatory rhetoric and short-term point-scoring.

In northern Mitrovica, there has been a very troubling and extended series of incidents involving the use of explosive devices, most of them apparently targeting properties. Sadly, however, on 4 February one such incident, in Mitrovica's mixed Three Towers neighbourhood, resulted in light shrapnel injuries to two children at play in their home. Their family has since moved away from the city permanently.

An ongoing lack of consensus about municipal authority in northern Mitrovica has also continued to cause volatility in the mixed areas. Competing assertions of authority by the administrative office in northern Mitrovica and the parallel Kosovska Mitrovica municipality continue to produce persistent tension and occasional confrontation on the ground. I am concerned that a stand-off over housing construction and reconstruction works, spearheaded by the southern Mitrovica municipality in the Kroi i Vitakut/Brđani neighbourhood of Zveçan/Zveçan municipality, may continue during the coming spring.

As I have detailed in previous briefings, ending budget allocations to the UNMIK administrative office in Mitrovica has undermined the most functional channel available to address such problems through consensus. Despite that development, my international staff continue to carry out the important non-executive functions of the United Nations administration in the areas of local facilitation, conflict prevention and mediation. Coordinated preparations are under way — involving the EU Special Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation, the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR), ourselves and other mandated actors — to respond appropriately and collectively so as to prevent any adverse developments in that area. It is very unfortunate and unacceptable that the personnel of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continue to be constrained in their access to all areas necessary to fully discharge their mandate, particularly given that EULEX is now intensifying its focus on improved investigative practices.

We were deeply distressed by the wave of vandalism and destruction that took place across Kosovo between 13 and 22 January, during which around 200 gravestones in several Serbian Orthodox cemeteries were damaged or destroyed, in some cases by use of explosives or firearms. During this same period, a monument dedicated to Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians killed during the Second World War was destroyed by earthmover in broad daylight before an applauding crowd. These reprehensible actions were unbefitting Kosovo, as were some imprudent efforts to justify them in the press by making reference to actions undertaken elsewhere.

In this respect, however, I was gratified by an unambiguous and timely statement issued by the Kosovo police. Representatives of the international community unanimously condemned such wanton acts and, together with UNMIK staff, were instrumental in encouraging more proactive public responses from local and central political authorities. Further appropriate and welcome actions have been taken by the Kosovo authorities,

including the allocation of public funds for the repair and reconstruction of the graves and monuments.

Understandably, the Serb community and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo remain deeply concerned by the expressions of hatred and intolerance that accompanied these and other acts targeting Orthodox sites and symbols. Regrettably, the level of attendance at Orthodox Christmas services in some parts of Kosovo fell significantly following public threats and a few protests organized by some radical groups in Kosovo.

The international community is particularly concerned over the continuing rejection by the municipal leadership in Dečani of a decision taken by the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo on 27 December. The decision rejected the claims over a parcel of land by two socially owned enterprises against Serbia and the Visoki Dečani Monastery. After summarily suspending relations with the monastic community, municipal leaders not only did far too little to restrain aggressive reactions against the court's decision, but also effectively condoned them. Such reactions included an attempt by a handful of demonstrators to enter the grounds of Visoki Dečani on 8 February, as well as several attempts to place offensive placards on its walls. Supported by KFOR, the Kosovo police have so far been able to prevent harm coming to the monastery; however, much stronger leadership from politicians and public officials is needed to demonstrate that universal values and respect for the rule of law will be defended in practice.

Too many serious crimes in northern Kosovo, as well as those affecting communities in the rest of Kosovo, continue to go unsolved and remain a matter of very sober concern. Judicial performance in Kosovo continues to be another significant stumbling block, aside from the political disputes. These issues were amply highlighted in the most recent report of the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council on progress in fulfilling requirements for a visa liberalization road map. Unsolved cases inevitably become subject to political manipulation and lead to the build-up of public frustration.

The political dialogue is now at a critical stage, and the parties are poised to make fundamental progress. Alongside this, stability on the ground remains fragile and is likely to remain so while these talks delve into topics that are both the most sensitive and the most essential. I trust that the progress being achieved will be welcomed by the membership of the Council, and that they will moreover offer unequivocal support to the parties to remain steadfast, regardless of the inevitable challenges and setbacks along the way. Likewise, the international community should be well prepared to place its collective weight and support behind all agreements reached mutually by the parties, and to fully support their implementation.

As I have outlined today, and as also detailed in the report, incidents and tensions continue to arise on the ground, underscoring the need for energy and effort to be rededicated by all international presences, alongside the negotiations. Simply put, it is imperative that the inevitable problems and setbacks on the ground, however difficult they may be for those affected, not be permitted to undermine the atmosphere and the potential for progress in the vital political talks.

I ask that the Council pursue opportunities to make use of its authority and influence with political leaders on all sides in order to send clear and unified signals regarding its high expectations and of its readiness to support and reward constructive actions. Far too much is at stake to permit short-term political challenges, anxieties and setbacks to put at risk the fundamental and historic opportunity that now stands before the parties. Effective, efficient and coherent work by all international presences is needed to promote and sustain the conditions in which political talks may achieve their true potential.

I wish to conclude my remarks today by thanking you, Sir, and all members of the Security Council for your close attention and support for the work of UNMIK, including for our efforts to correctly tailor our contributions to the evolving circumstances on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United

Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his work to date.

The Republic of Serbia considers UNMIK as the key factor in establishing peace and stability in Kosovo and Metohija. We strongly support its activities aimed at ensuring living conditions for all population groups there.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia very much appreciates the efforts of the international community to establish a constructive atmosphere in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the European Union.

I have studied carefully the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK from 16 October 2012 to 15 January 2013 (S/2013/72). It is with regret that I note that the information set out in the report continues to reflect the very precarious and sensitive position of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the existence of considerable security concerns.

The Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to building peace, security and stability in the region, in its quest to establish a foundation for a common European future. On a number of occasions during the period under consideration, the Government of the Republic of Serbia confirmed its readiness to make a substantial and constructive contribution to overcoming outstanding issues and to offer solutions that meet the needs of all population groups.

My country's concerted policy is based on seeking compromise while actively defending our national interests, with equal respect for the legitimate rights of both Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo and Metohija. Accordingly, we continue to oppose unilateral steps from all quarters — for example, the decision of the Assembly of Kosovo to ask for an international country code for Kosovo through the Republic of Albania, even though negotiations regarding telecommunications are pending.

We shall continue to promote and carry out our policy based on the search for peaceful solutions through a constructive dialogue with Pristina, which has already yielded significant results. For the Government of the Republic of Serbia, dialogue is the only way to find sustainable solutions for the problems that the people of Kosovo and Metohija face on a daily basis. We are resolved to fully implement the agreements reached thus far, and we are open to talks on all issues.

The Republic of Serbia has embarked upon dialogue out of a desire to achieve concrete progress in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. A number of very important issues were discussed at the recent meetings held in Brussels, including the functioning of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points as well as the exchange and the status of liaison officers.

The meeting in Brussels between Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga once again clearly confirmed our political positions spelled out in the resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. In line with that resolution, the specificities of the territory of Kosovo and Metohija are recognized in accordance with Council resolution 1244 (1999). However, it also notes the existence of the Serbian and other communities that should have certain autonomous status.

The Republic of Serbia believes that the United Nations should continue to perform its key role of coordinating all international actors engaged in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija under its aegis. We believe that the role of UNMIK in stabilizing the situation in the region is irreplaceable. Its current mandate must therefore remain unchanged and, if possible, strengthened, irrespective of projected budgetary restrictions. We support an increase in UNMIK's activities, as well as a heightened presence for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and more efficient cooperation between two missions. It is of the utmost importance that the UNMIK Administration in northern Mitrovica continue to fulfil its mandate and find a status-neutral way for the missions in Kosovo and Metohija to function, as provided for in resolution 1244 (1999).

For the Republic of Serbia, the continued financing of the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica is of particular importance. We deem unacceptable any further limitations on the activities of the Administration for reasons of financial constraints due to the cessation of financing by the provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina. After all, UNMIK is the only legitimate international presence that the people in the north of Kosovo and Metohija continue to trust.

The Republic of Serbia has great interest in strengthening the political composition of UNMIK, in particular with respect to questions of special importance for the Serbian community. In that regard,

special mention should be made of the protection of cultural and religious heritage, in particular of the Serbian Orthodox Church, improving the level of legal and security protection and realizing the right to free return and reconciliation. In fact, those questions form the fundamental basis for the establishment of conditions necessary for normal coexistence among all communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

A few days ago, we commemorated the ninth anniversary of the March pogrom during which 19 persons were killed, 4,000 Serbs were expelled and 6 towns and 10 villages were ethnically cleansed, while over 150 religious sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church, of which 34 date back to the Middle Ages, were damaged or destroyed. Some of them are of particular cultural significance and under the protection of UNESCO. According to United Nations estimates, 51,000 individuals took part in the pogrom, and none of them were held accountable. For that reason, we call for the resumption of the investigation, which would lead to the identification of perpetrators, as well as the instigators of the March pogrom, so that the crime does not remain yet another crime without punishment.

In the period under consideration, the Republic of Serbia once again demonstrated its willingness and readiness to participate actively in, and to make a contribution to, overcoming the existing problems. The main goal of that constructive approach is to find a solution that will improve life for all communities in Kosovo and Metohija while also preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia.

I regret to note that, in spite of the long-standing international presence, the situation on the ground has not improved substantially. The main problems we continue to face include limits to, and the prevention of, the freedom of movement, a lack of security, the impossibility of using the Serbian language, difficult access to institutions, a lack of the necessary conditions for the sustainable return of refugees, constant threats to Serbian cultural and religious heritage, and the illegal seizure of property owned by the Republic of Serbia.

Those problems are surely the most important factors negatively affecting the quality of life itself. According to the available data, 93 ethnically motivated attacks were recorded between 1 October 2012 and 31 January 2013, in which one person was killed and 20 persons were injured. Within just a few days in January of this year, 102 tombstones were damaged or destroyed in Orthodox graveyards. As a rule, no one was held accountable or punished for those incidents. Of particular importance is the increase in the number of registered ethnically motivated low-intensity crimes, such as threats, intimidation and theft. Such "low-intensity" crimes contribute to further limiting the freedom of movement.

In the period under review, the continued increase in the number of detentions and arrests of members of the Serbian community — without any explanation of the legal basis on which such warrants were issued — has been the cause of additional concern and anxiety. The unlawful detention and beating of 11 Serbian youths in Gracanica on Christmas Eve further heightened concern and fear among the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Those incidents create additional pressure on, and distrust within, the Serbian community, while at the same time being gross violations of the basic human rights guaranteed to each and every individual by the Charter of the United Nations. They are equally unacceptable from the perspective of the values upon which the European Union is based.

Although they honour all previously agreed procedures, officials and eminent public persons of the Republic of Serbia are not allowed to enter and stay in Kosovo and Metohija, in contravention of the basic human right to freedom of movement. I would in particular point out that, last January, even the President of Republic of Serbia was banned from visiting Kosovo and Metohija and attending the Christmas liturgy.

It is with regret that I must note that the process of the return of internally persons from Kosovo and Metohija is very slow. According to the most recent data, for 2012, only 302 persons of Serbian nationality returned to Kosovo and Metohija, while there were 464 such returns in 2011. That data provides telling evidence of a continued reduction in the number of returnees. Paradoxically, the international community shows less and less interest in the problem. In particular, I would like to point to the October 2012 report of the Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which states that the frequent plundering of uninhabited houses, the intimidation of returnees and the desecration of places of religious and cultural importance have very negatively affected potential returnees' perception of security.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia continues to be concerned about the manner in which privatization is implemented in Kosovo and Metohija by the so-called Kosovo Privatization Agency. Of particular concern is the privatization of public and social enterprises in Serbian communities. The privatization of the large Trepca mining complex, currently postponed, is illegal and contrary to resolution 1244 (1999). The Republic of Serbia holds majority ownership of the complex, as well as of other Serbian enterprises. In addition, as guarantor, the Republic of Serbia continues to make payments to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris and London Clubs for loans to enterprises in Kosovo and Metohija.

I take this opportunity to draw the Council's attention to the disturbing facts presented in paragraph 31 of the report on the work of UNMIK, which indicates that there is an increase in the number of complaints against police and prosecution officials for inefficiency in investigating crimes affecting minority communities. Likewise, the reform of the judiciary and justice systems in Kosovo and Metohija — embarked upon recently, as indicated in paragraph 28 of the report — has already been criticized by the international community.

The inadequate level of development in the area of the rule of law is referred to in the annex to the Secretary-General's report — on the work of EULEX — which draws attention to the "Compact". Once again, the question arises as to the status-neutrality of that EULEX act, especially at this very sensitive moment when each and every inconsiderate and biased move can cause unforeseeable consequences. I should therefore like to recall that, under the Secretary-General's six-point plan, UNMIK is obliged to oversee the process of the transfer of powers to EULEX. However, it is also obliged to see to it that the principle of the status-neutrality of EULEX is maintained.

We have recently witnessed even more instances of desecrations of Serbian tombstones and cultural monuments in Kosovo and Metohija. Such incidents are telling evidence of the need for the continued presence of the Kosovo Force in Kosovo and Metohija.

I should again like to point to the importance of carrying out a full and efficient investigation of the allegations of trafficking in human organs set out in the report by Mr. Dick Marty. To that end, Serbia is ready to continue to cooperate with the EULEX investigation team. The truth must be established in the utmost professional and impartial way, while bearing in mind in particular the information collected by UNMIK with regard to the destruction of evidence. We continue to call for more significant role for the United Nations in the investigation.

We consider it necessary that UNMIK continue to be present in Kosovo and Metohija at an appropriate strength so that, among other things, the Security Council can continue to be effectively informed, considering that the United Nations plays an irreplaceable role in providing legitimacy during the process of seeeking a comprehensive solution.

Without respect for the basic human and other rights of the non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija, without protection for their interests and cultural and religious heritage, and without a full implementation of European standards in those areas, the desired goal of creating a secure and safe multinational society will remain unrealized.

In order to achieve lasting peace in the region, we must find a comprehensive solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians calls for difficult decisions and compromise by both sides.

The meetings held thus far in Brussels and the demonstrated readiness to achieve compromise are proof of the commitment of the Republic of Serbia to building confidence between the two sides. My country will continue to cooperate in good faith, at both the technical and the political levels. With a lasting solution for sustainable peace based on mutually acceptable compromises as its ultimate goal, Serbia is committed to moving towards its European future and to the process designed to bring about lasting peace between Serbs and Albanians.

After years of conflict and tension in the Balkans, our region has yet to enter a new era of cooperation, confidence-building and dialogue. The Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to the continuation of the process of reconciliation as a key element necessary for the establishment of regional peace and stability.

However, strong political will is of the utmost importance for there to be tangible and sustainable development of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, as is political courage and readiness on the part of all participants in the dialogue to achieve compromise. Serbia is fully committed to the

success of that dialogue; it is not ready, however, for humiliation and double standards. I do hope, however, that the dialogue in Brussels, with the support of the international community, will bring about a just, lasting and sustainable solution, and that we will all turn towards the future.

In conclusion, I wish to underline that Serbia's readiness to participate in the dialogue does not mean that it will change its principled position on the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. The dialogue is status-neutral. Any agreement reached in Brussels will not lead to the Republic of Serbia's recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. We would like to convey that message to all the countries that have not recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, as well as to thank them for their principled and consistent position.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Prime Minister Dačić for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Thaçi.

Mr. Thaçi (*spoke in Albanian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my pleasure to address the Security Council today concerning the latest developments in the Republic of Kosovo. Allow me to begin by expressing my great gratitude for the ongoing efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on behalf of peace and progress in Kosovo and the Balkans.

Before turning to the main points of my statement — namely, the progress made in Kosovo since the previous reporting period and in consolidating Kosovo's statehood — allow me to recall to the Council that, just a few weeks ago, Kosovo's citizens and institutions solemnly commemorated the fifth anniversary of our declaration of independence. In that time, Kosovo has made considerable progress in many areas. Full credit for this achievement goes to the people of the Republic of Kosovo, who were able to overcome the effects of years of systematic repression and ethnic cleansing and look forward to a prosperous future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our highest appreciation to all the States and other international actors who contributed greatly to our democracy, freedom and progress. Let us not forget, in this respect, the leading role of the United States of America, all the States members of the European Union and NATO and all the countries worldwide that have proudly recognized the Republic of Kosovo and thus enabled Kosovo to take its rightful place among the free nations of the world. Special acknowledgment goes to the United Nations, whose support was crucial, first in building independent institutional structures in Kosovo from 1999 to 2007; then in facilitating negotiations for a final settlement of Kosovo's status from 2005 to 2007 and former President Ahtisaari's package as a constitutional and political reflection of modern Kosovo; and finally, confirming the legality of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo through the affirmative advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 22 July 2010.

Thus began a new chapter in the history of the newest State in Europe — a State with a difficult past marked by many sacrifices, but with the intention of being an equal player in the democratic world, a prosperous, developed, fair, safe State of which future generations can be proud, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion.

On this fifth anniversary of independence, the State of Kosovo has become stronger, thanks to the end of international supervision and the assumption by the institutions and citizens of Kosovo of responsibility for all matters. That is additional proof of the State-building maturity of the citizens of Kosovo. Kosovo, as an independent and sovereign State, is a reality that has already been accepted and has become a factor of peace and stability by contributing to regional and international processes. Despite its difficult birth as a State, Kosovo is one of the most successful examples of state-building in the history of the United Nations, and the result of conscience and international justice. Kosovo's independence is as the result, on the one hand, of the combination of continuous efforts of the sacrifice of the people of Kosovo for freedom and dignity, and on the other, of the contribution and support of the international community to end the chapter of the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

The consolidation of Kosovo's statehood is tangible. Kosovo is now recognized by more than half of United Nations Member States, and the spread of its recognition has proven to be irreversible. Many other countries are in the process of recognizing Kosovo's statehood and independence, and I can assure them that that is the most just decision they can make for Kosovo and its citizens. I recall that these recognitions and other recognitions to follow derive from our right to statehood, confirmed by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, from the constructive role Kosovo

plays in strengthening peace and stability in the Balkan region, and from our commitment to the implementation of the Ahtisaari plan and the protection of minorities in accordance with the highest international standards.

In this respect, after joining the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on 27 February, the Republic of Kosovo has become a member of the Regional Cooperation Council, an umbrella organization for regional cooperation in South-East Europe that has 46 members. With this membership, the Republic of Kosovo has embarked upon an irreversible path towards integration into the European Union, because the Regional Cooperation Council — as successor to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe is the main instrument of pre-accession into the European Union. Kosovo will have the same rights of representation, voting and signing as all other States members of that Council. In addition, Kosovo will benefit in terms of the social and institutional strengthening of its human potential, and will enjoy the support of a number of social and economic initiatives, including investment facilities, development initiatives for small- and medium-sized enterprises, trade liberalization, improvements in public health, social dialogue and other reforms.

In terms of accession to international organizations, let me inform the Council that on 22 January the Council of Europe adopted a resolution paving the way for the establishment of direct formal relations with the Republic of Kosovo. The resolution allows direct cooperation, especially in the key areas of human rights, freedom of expression and the protection of cultural heritage. That act is important because it will directly strengthen the rule of law. Furthermore, the Assembly of Kosovo will be able to directly monitor the work of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. As of today, 34 of the 47 members of the Council of Europe have recognized the Republic of Kosovo.

Internal developments in Kosovo have been characterized by political and economic stability. Let me emphasize that Kosovo continues to maintain financial stability and sustainable economic growth despite the ongoing global crisis. Moreover, a free market economy and market security for foreign investors are important foundations for increasing the welfare of the citizens of Kosovo.

As indicated in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72), Kosovo has undertaken significant judicial reforms that came into force on 1 January through legislation such as the Law on Courts, the new Criminal Code and the new Criminal Procedure Code. Those reforms are compatible with European standards and as such are aimed at strengthening the sustainability of the judicial and prosecutorial sector in Kosovo, in full cooperation with European expertise.

In the context of the war on corruption, on 11 February a law was enacted by the Assembly to increase powers to seize assets gained from criminal acts. A law for the prevention of money-laundering and terrorist financing has also been adopted by the Assembly. The Assembly of Kosovo also approved a new anti-corruption strategy on 11 February. By late 2012, strategies and action plans had been adopted for the fight against organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking, and on integrated border management.

Considerable progress has been made in relation to the protection of cultural and religious heritage. On 12 February, the Government of Kosovo, and in particular the Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, signed an administrative instruction for the establishment of an implementation and monitoring council. The establishment of the council provides for more focused monitoring of Serbian religious and cultural heritage institutions, and is among the priorities derived from the feasibility study for the start of negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement. It also contributes to the normalization of relations between the institutions of Kosovo and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo.

The implementation and monitoring council will assist and monitor the implementation of the legal provisions of the Republic of Kosovo regarding the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo, including in particular the provisions of the Law on Special Protected Areas, the Historic Centre of Prizren and Hoçë e Madhe Village. The council, set up by the legislation of the Republic of Kosovo and supported by the President Ahtisaari package, is co-chaired by the Government, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Serbian Orthodox Church. This year, my Government has allocated an initial €100,000 for the operation of that mechanism. The European Union and the United States of America have welcomed the overall progress.

Through the Ministry of Communities and Returns, Kosovo's Government has continued to provide financial support for initiatives aimed at the return and reintegration of minorities in Kosovo. Building houses is a clear example of the ongoing efforts of the Republic of Kosovo to accommodate returnees of different communities — providing decent living conditions that will, in turn, have a positive effect on other aspects of life, such as employment, health and education. Kosovo's institutions have responded to the demands of the vulnerable by strengthening its policy and strategy on internally displaced persons and returnees and by creating more favourable conditions for sustainable return and reintegration. In recent months, the Republic of Kosovo has built or repaired 76 houses for returnees in all regions. In the same period, the Government completed 21 infrastructure projects in minority returnee communities. All those investments contribute to stabilizing the socioeconomic situation in Kosovo's ethnic minority communities. Finally, we have taken steps to facilitate the return from Montenegro of persons displaced from Kosovo.

In addition, Kosovo has taken serious measures to integrate Serbs living in northern Kosovo. However, unfortunately, the destructive practices of parallel structures have been a constant obstacle and have undermined our good intentions and commitment to socioeconomic investment in that part of Kosovo.

To date, the administrative office in northern Mitrovica opened by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has provided services for more than 2,000 members of the Serb community living in the north. That is further proof that even in the north of the country there can be space for cooperation and integration. We believe that the office will be beneficial to the local population, because it is intended to improve their living conditions by providing better local services, generating employment and coordinating donor assistance planned for investments in the north of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, the office has been targeted several times by unidentified groups in the north. Recently, violent attacks against senior officials of Serbian nationality at the institution have increased, leaving the operation of the office vulnerable to threats and acts of violence, which prevent it from carrying out its daily administrative services. In addition, at least 20 other incidents have occurred in the north during the past three months. We have evidence to suspect that Serbian parallel structures are behind those criminal acts, which aim to intimidate officials working at the office and to prevent the Serbs from the north from taking advantage of the services offered to them.

We call on Serbia to dismantle those illegal security and justice structures and to stop trying to create tensions in Kosovo. We are not alone in making that call, which is supported by a large number of countries that have invested a great deal for the sake of peace and stability in Kosovo, as well as by the United Nations.

In addition to dividing Serbs in the south from those in the north, the use of fear tactics in the situation in the northern municipalities is preventing the north's integration into Kosovo's institutions. That criminal tendency reminds me of a terrible case just a couple of years ago where the current Deputy Chairman of the Assembly of Kosovo, Petar Miletić, was shot and injured, and, due to that violent pressure, was forced to migrate from northern Mitrovica. Therefore, for the past 13 years, all the communities in that part of Kosovo have been at constant risk due to the absence of the rule of law and the resulting anarchy.

In addition, on 19 March a Kosovo police officer was attacked in the municipality of Leposavić. A powerful explosion occurred near the gate of the police station, causing considerable material damage. Such orchestrated attacks are intended to keep the security situation tense, not giving a chance to peace and the rule of law.

I must again draw the Council's attention to the fact that, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, the situation in the three northern municipalities continues to be a serious source of instability in Kosovo, as well as a serious threat to the entire security structure of our region. This difficult situation, which aims to destabilize the functioning of the State of Kosovo, is in complete violation of international norms and resolution 1244 (1999). This situation must be stopped as soon as possible.

Our offer to every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, is simple and clear: our State is our common future, and we will build it for our common good and for the benefit of those of our citizens in the municipalities in the north of Kosovo whose lives continue to be held hostage by certain groups. The establishment of the rule of law and order in the northern part of the territory of the Republic of Kosovo is essential for its development within the framework of the Constitution and the laws

of the country, and for peace, safety and welfare of our citizens of the Serb community.

I want to believe that my counterpart from Serbia, Prime Minister Dačić, is deeply concerned for the rule of law in the north of Kosovo and that the Serbian community living there develops normally and without fear.

The freedom of movement remains one of the main challenges in that part of the territory of Kosovo. Not only are orchestrated barricades physical barriers but, above all, they send political messages about ethnic divisions. Even the international presence — the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) — are denied the freedom of movement, leaving them unable to fulfil their missions. We witnessed similar scenarios in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia during the war in the 1990s. I would like to reassure the Council, however, that Kosovo will not be a place of divisions and barricades. We will not allow the building of a new Republika Srpska.

I have full confidence that the physical barricades that are set up on various roads in the north to prevent free movement will be removed voluntarily by the citizens who live there. Self-isolation does not bring about progress; obstruction of the freedom of movement should not be a value promoted by Serbia. Unfortunately, the role of Serbia continues to be destructive by unlawfully using and operating illegal structures in Kosovo, thereby further aggravating the political and security situation.

In that context, on the occasion of the Orthodox New Year this January, there was an incident between the Kosovo Police — as the only legitimate and legal force — and 10 members of illegal structures — the so-called Civil Defence Corps — who were supposedly engaged to protect a Serbian Government official, Alexander Vulin, during his visit to the municipality of Gracanica.

In that case, the Kosovo Police was hampered in the performance of its official duty to protect public order and severely provoked. As a result, they accompanied the 10 individuals to the police station in Gracanica on suspicion that they had ignored lawful orders of the police. Those individuals had been escorted to the police station in order to enable the police to carry out their security duties and responsibilities. The action was thus taken for the security of the Serbian official. Despite the tendency to politicize the case and allow the media to echo allegations of ethnic abuse, the decision of the Kosovo police was fair and legitimate. In connection with the occurrence, I would refer the Council to the accurate and constructive reporting by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, contained in one of the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General, "No complaints about their treatment by Kosovo police were made on either occasion" (*S/2013/72, annex I, p. 14*).

After the removal of the Albanian martyrs monument in the Preševo valley on 20 January by numerous Serb gendarmerie forces, an emotional and violent reaction broke out, with unidentified individuals demolishing Serbian Orthodox cemeteries and Second World War memorials in eight locations in Kosovo. The Kosovo Government, local civil society and the international presence condemned those incidents, and the Kosovo police arrested a number of suspects and is committed to pursuing an effective investigation of those cases. My Government has allocated €97,000 for the swift repair of damaged graves and monuments. I assure the Council that we are not dealing with coordinated actions here. I am also pleased by the immediate response of law enforcement officials and the public condemnation of the acts by the Kosovo leadership.

As to the allegations of war crimes in Kosovo that are contained in the report of the Secretary-General, we are sure that addressing those charges will confirm the purity and justness of the war waged by our people in their quest for freedom and independence. While the Serbian State has so far failed to issue a formal apology for its regime-sponsored human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, we welcome the statement made by Yugoslav army general Dragoljub Ojdanić to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in January, in which he admitted to having committed war crimes against Kosovo Albanians in the 1990s. His admission constitutes an important recognition that violence was acceptable to and orchestrated by the Serbian authorities at the time, a fact which had already been recognized and documented by the United Nations. We encourage other institutions in Serbia to acknowledge the crimes committed in Kosovo and allow for the telling and documenting of the truth. That would obviously be a strong foundation and a breakthrough moment for reconciliation and coexistence.

In that context, on 18 March my Government created a working group to address the past and

reconciliation. The formation of the group had been postponed until such time as we felt that our society was capable of dealing with the past in one way or other, in order to restore relations, seek and face the truth, and demand reparations for war damages as is generally provided for by criminal justice systems. Because we do not have normal relations with Serbia, the process of dealing with and facing the past has become even more difficult. Nevertheless, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo believes that we have to deal with the past, taking into account the rights and status of each victim of the war. However, we also believe that the signing of a peace treaty regulating relations between Kosovo and Serbia would have to include a Serbian apology, compensation for war damages, and truth on the issue of missing persons and other issues related to the war. That would help create an environment more condusive to facing the past and dealing with outstanding issues.

The Republic of Kosovo has entered into a political dialogue with Serbia brokered by the European Union, which has been brilliantly managed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton. Of course, the process has been strongly supported by all the world's democracies, which are interested in contributing to peace and stability. The dialogue is aimed at normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and is considered to be the main tool for integrating the Serb population in northern Kosovo into the country's social and institutional life of Kosovo by offering them opportunities to improve their lives and providing them with security, public services, the rule of law, economic stewardship and democratic governance.

Based on the current rate of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, I remain reservedly optimistic that by resolving practical, technical and inter-State issues, we are fulfilling key prerequisites that will lead us to the next stage of mutual recognition. Of course, this is not at all an easy process; indeed, it is extremely difficult for Kosovo and Serbia because the bitterness of the past remains fresh. But let me assure the Council that the process could succeed with a minimum of political will coming from Serbia. I therefore once again invite Serbia to be reasonable and rational and seize the opportunity before us to reach an agreement for normalization of relations between our countries. Success in such a dialogue would benefit both countries and above all our citizens. If the dialogue succeeds, there will be no losers — only winners.

At the same time, Kosovo intends to make progress in its relationship with the European Union by accelerating its process of European integration and coordinating joint efforts to fulfil the requirements for membership. We are also engaged in dialogue to heighten our international profile by obtaining more recognitions of our Statehood and memberships in international organizations, including our legitimate request for membership in the United Nations.

Our commitment to dialogue with Serbia is in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/298 and the relevant resolution of the Assembly of Kosovo, and in full compliance with the Constitution and laws of Kosovo. In the dialogue with Serbia, there can be no negotiation on the sovereignty, political status or territorial integrity of Kosovo. The international support for those inviolable red lines is very important to us.

There is no doubt that the Ahtisaari plan sponsored by the United Nations remains the most generous offer possible, providing the Serbs in Kosovo with a broad space for self-governance and the ability to exercise their political, socioeconomic and cultural rights. The Ahtisaari plan provides the Serbs in the north, inter alia, with broad local self-governance, the right to use their mother tongue in all public affairs, freedom of media, freedom of education at the primary, secondary and university levels, the opportunity for an overhaul of the health-care system, financial and local fiscal management, and the right to select local police leadership, establish associations in Kosovo Serb majority municipalities, and maintain special ties with other municipalities in Serbia. The Ahtisaari plan is thus a very liberal and generous plan that offers a wide range of self-governance capacities to minorities, as has been proven by effective decentralization since our independence five years ago, which resulted in increased political participation of Serbs in Kosovo, growing inter-ethnic stability and improved social welfare.

In the dialogue process with Serbia, we have held seven rounds of meetings since October 2012. Significant results have been achieved so far, which gives hope for a successful conclusion of the process. We are now nearly at the final stage of the process. Unfortunately, over the past three months the Serbian side has come up with a platform that demands territorial autonomy for Kosovo Serbs and the creation of a separate entity in Kosovo. Similarly, Serbia later proposed an association, or

community association, in Kosovo Serb municipalities that would have legislative and executive powers and be the result of direct elections. That proposal is another failed effort to create a third level of government in Kosovo. That is against our constitutional order, which has been built together with our international partners. We are very concerned that such proposals are aimed at creating a new Republika Srpska in Kosovo, which would make Kosovo non-functional and unstable, complicate the internal political consensus, cause the process of our European integration and the integration of minorities in Kosovo to stagnate, undermine the process of successful decentralization in Kosovo, antagonize the majority population and undercut all of the international political and economic investments made in the past 14 years. That idea cannot be put into practice in Kosovo.

We are witness to the fact that such arrangements in the region have become structural obstacles to peace and ethnic reconciliation, democracy, a multi-ethnic citizenry and effective governance. It is important to emphasize the international commitment and determination with respect to the fact that a change of borders in the Western Balkans or any tendency towards territorial rearrangement could destabilize the region, cause ethnic divisions to flare up and create other problems.

The agreements reached so far in the context of the technical and political dialogue are very important, because they address issues that have preoccupied us for a long time and made the lives of our citizens difficult. The regional cooperation agreement allows for Kosovo's independent representation in organizations and at regional events, and does away with ambiguities and indirect representation. The agreement on the opening of a liaison office and the exchange of liaison officers opens an initial chapter in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia as two independent countries and good neighbours.

The agreement on customs stamps supercedes informal arrangements, establishes proper governance in the area of of customs and increases the economic benefits to Kosovo and Serbia. The agreement on the return of civil registry and cadastral books will enable the resolution of property disputes.

Finally, the agreement on the recognition of university diplomas allows for more youth employment. It is a fact that in this historic process, Serbia has gradually accepted the legitimacy and constitutionality of the Republic of Kosovo.

The Supreme Court of Kosovo cadastral agreement has been accepted as the final authority. Concerning vehicle registration plates, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo has been accepted as the final authority, just as Kosovo customs is the final authority in the area of customs.

In the current dialogue, Kosovo has proved to be more consistent, more responsible and more decisive in the implementation of the agreements reached. We have taken all of the necessary political and technical measures for the implementation of the agreements reached so far. We have also expressed a willingness to increase economic investments in this part of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, Serbia has not shown the same level of readiness, as evidenced by the many delays in and obstacles to the implementation of the agreements reached. Serbia is still trying to prevent Kosovo from participating in regional events.

The agreement on free movement is hampered by the barriers placed in the north of Kosovo, which, unfortunately, are directed from Belgrade. The return of cadastral and civil registry documents is being unjustifiably delayed.

The agreement on the opening of liaison offices and the exchange of liaison officers, which has not yet been implemented, represents a significant step towards the establishment of diplomatic relations between two independent countries.

Other issues that remain unresolved in the context of this dialogue are the fate of those persons who went missing during the war in Kosovo, with 1,700 still missing; the issue of energy and telecommunications; and the dismantling of Serbia's illegal parallel structures in the field of security, which operate in the north of Kosovo in violation of international law.

We rightfully expect dedication and determination from Serbia as concerns the full implementation of the agreements, as well as the immediate dismantling of its structures in Kosovo. We assure the Council that the Republic of Kosovo will play a constructive role in this dialogue, as it has done in the past, in accordance with the Constitution and our laws and with goodwill, so as to improve the lives of citizens and reach an agreement to normalize our relations with Serbia that

further strengthens and consolidates our statehood and international recognition.

The Republic of Kosovo has proved and continues to prove that it embraces European values. The European agenda of my country has already become a working plan for society as a whole, considering that EU integration is an incentive to achieve the most important goals of our society: political stability, respect for human rights and the development of a sustainable economy. The European agenda is a reform agenda, not just integration. That process did not start yesterday; since the Thessaloniki summit of 2003, Kosovo has had its own independent path in relation to EU integration.

Kosovo has already entered an important period as a country, with significant advancements in many fields, bringing Kosovo into the focus of the EU enlargement policy. That has been done as a result of the reforms carried out and the comprehensive support and determination shown across the political spectrum and by the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo. I am honoured to represent a society where integration into the EU and NATO has more than 90 per cent of public support; it is maintaining that support at a much higher level in relation to other countries.

The European Commission has confirmed that our country has made significant progress on the road to EU membership, emphasizing the fact that Kosovo is ready to open negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement, with the short-term fulfilment of specific criteria in the areas of the rule of law, public administration, the protection of minorities and trade. That joint success was reaffirmed recently by the visit of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Mr. Štefan Fule, in Pristina.

Above all, the Republic of Kosovo is making great strides towards the establishment of contractual relations with the European Union. With the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, we are taking the first, very important step on the road to membership in and full integration into the Union.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement will also enable Kosovo to have a long-term perspective for sustainable economic development, improving Kosovo's trade position and providing stability for foreign investors. That will have a significant impact on the advancement of democratic processes, the promotion of internal reforms and the deepening of mutual political and economic cooperation between Kosovo and the European Union.

In that context, we welcome the European Parliament draft resolution on Kosovo dated 11 February 2013. In particular, we consider it very important that the draft resolution encourages the five remaining EU countries that did not recognize Kosovo's independence to do so; rejects Kosovo's territorial division; affirms the spirit of the Ahtisaari package and emphasizes that that plan is an adequate platform to resolve disputes in the North; welcomes the end of the supervised independence of Kosovo in September of last year; welcomes the greater participation of Kosovo's representation in international organizations and initiatives; welcomes the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue agreements reached to date; and condemns the acts of violence in northern Kosovo and the deviant behavior of the local groups.

In addition, Kosovo is advancing in the process of visa liberalization for its citizens. My Government is very much committed to this process being completed quickly, so that the people of Kosovo can come out of the isolation that they have been in for more than two decades and move freely, like the other peoples of the Balkans. Kosovo's Government has proved that it is able to make progress on the criteria set by the European Commission, including in the areas of readmission; reintegration; document security; integrated border management; migration management; asylum; the prevention and combating of organized crime, corruption and terrorism; international cooperation on law enforcement; judicial cooperation in criminal matters; data protection; and the fundamental right to freedom of movement.

I should like to make it clear, however, that any asymmetry that puts an additional burden on Kosovo to implement new criteria that is not required of other Western Balkan countries would hurt its image and the credibility of the process. Kosovo has not even a day to waste, because decades have already been lost as a result of apartheid and conflict. Above all, we call upon the European Union to foster internal unity in Kosovo, without further hindrance to our deserved integration.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the Western Balkans has no room for conflict or belligerent policies aimed at violating territorial integrity at any cost since the violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Efforts to create frozen conflicts by destabilizing the region are doomed to failure. The Republic of Kosovo

has encoded its Constitution to reflect that it has no territorial claim against anyone.

Finally, I recall that Kosovo is one of the most successful instances of State-building and peacebuilding in United Nations history and in international governance more generally. Resolution 1244 (1999) has been implemented for a long time. We have implemented the Ahtisaari plan, resulting in the successful conclusion of international supervision last September. To date, Kosovo has been recognized by more than half of the United Nations Member States and is a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as many other regional and international initiatives. Kosovo is in the process of integration into the European Union as a full member among all others. Kosovo has installed a democratic Government, built a multi-ethnic society and is maintaining sustainable economic growth.

The Republic of Kosovo has been internationally recognized, which should be welcomed by all Security Council members. Moreover, we rightfully anticipate that in the near future, given developments in Kosovo and the region, and in particular our conviction that Kosovo and Serbia will normalize inter-State relations as a result of the dialogue process, the Security Council will draft and adopt a new resolution making Kosovo an equal, peace-loving Member of the United Nations capable of maintaining order and assuming its international responsibilities.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Allow me to express my appreciation to Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his leadership and commitment to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and his efforts to implement its mandate in Kosovo.

I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements. Their presence today in the Council demonstrates their political will and courage to embark on the difficult yet indispensable process of working together in order to normalize the relationship between the two capitals.

When we look at the history of the issue at hand, the trail we see is one of a bitter past and bitter memories. However, in Rwanda we believe that it is in the common interest of both parties to turn the page on that part of their history and continue with serious negotiations to bring peace and lasting security in the region. In the same spirit, it is our hope that both leaders will make further progress on the outstanding issues, mainly those concerning northern Kosovo, and reach an agreement in view of the upcoming meeting on 2 April.

Both leaders have made important strides. In that respect, we hope that the international community, in particular the Council, will be well prepared to mobilize resources and political backing to encourage both leaders to reach a sustainable agreement leading to lasting peace.

With reference to the report that is before the Council (S/2013/72), it notes the positive developments in Kosovo, and we acknowledge that the situation has been relatively calm. However, the ongoing tensions in northern Kosovo are worrisome and could spark intercommunal violence, which would cause lasting harm to peace and security and even the agreements that have been reached. I acknowledge that improvement has been seen in the Kosovo police, which has taken ownership in the provision of law and order and addressed the concerns of its citizens through increased participation of the municipal community safety councils.

In addition, we welcome the collaboration between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo in helping the Ministry of Justice to implement reform of the justice sector. We also welcome the cooperation between UNMIK and other international organizations, as manifested in the work achieved. We encourage the international community to maintain its commitment and increase its support to enable those organizations to achieve their mandates. I also remain convinced that the task of building a stable and prosperous region will need both leaders to come together and negotiate a lasting solution.

To conclude, my delegation believes that achieving peace in the region lies within the hands of the two countries; it is therefore crucial that both parties demonstrate political will and a sincere desire to continue through dialogue to bring about a lasting peace.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Zarif for introducing the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

(UNMIK). I also thank the Prime Minister of Serbia and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

I will principally address the issues related to the still precarious security situation in northern Kosovo, and those related to normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia. For nearly two years, under the auspices of the European Union (EU), the Serbian and Kosovar authorities have undertaken a process aimed at normalizing their relations. My country welcomes the progress made since then. It is noteworthy that, at the technical level, the dialogue has led to an agreement aimed at improving the daily lives of the people in both territories, whose existence has been roiled by the political and legal stalemate.

Both sides have therefore agreed on arrangements, in particular the exchange of liaison officers, in order to improve communications and the joint management of crossing points. They have agreed on a customs regime involving the recognition of documents including vehicle registration plates, identification documents and university diplomas from Kosovo. My country is convinced that such initiatives will promote the rapprochement of the people of Kosovo and Serbia by promoting increased exchanges between both territories and by addressing the daily tensions arising from coexistence.

The dialogue undertaken has gradually evolved from technical to policy issues in recent months, which we welcome. We commend the positive momentum made possible by the mediation efforts of the European Union and highlighted by the recent high-level meetings in Brussels on 6 February between the President of Serbia and the leader of Kosovo, and between their Prime Ministers on 19 and 20 February. Togo welcomes the resolve reaffirmed by the senior officials at those meetings to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The powerful symbol of the normalization process represented by those meetings is encouraging, given that only a few months earlier their positions were so rigid that such meetings between senior Serbian and Kosovar officials could scarcely have been imagined. Still, beyond the symbolic aspect, Togo hopes that the momentum will continue in order to bring about a rapid settlement to the sensitive and complex issue of the maintenance of parallel Serbian structures in northern Kosovo, and ultimately of the final status of Kosovo. To that end, we urge both sides to be much more open and flexible with a view to a win-win solution in the interests of the Serbian and Kosovar populations and to promote peace and stability in the region.

Togo also remains concerned about the inter-ethnic tensions still evident in northern Kosovo, in particular in North Mitrovica, which risk jeopardizing reconciliation efforts. In December 2012 and in January, there was an increase in the number of demonstrations condemning, in particular, certain aspects of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points, the building of housing for repatriated Albanians in North Mitrovica and restrictions on the freedom of movement of Serbian senior officials to Kosovo. That led to the Serbian President cancelling his visit to Gračanica monastery in January.

Such developments attest to the ongoing inter-ethnic strife and the limited positive response locally to reconciliation initiatives. Togo believes that there must be a particular focus on the local impact of the reconciliation process. In that regard, we call on the religious authorities and the civil society of Serbia and Kosovo to become more involved in bringing together the various communities. In that regard, we commend the example of the dialogue between the Orthodox Church in Kosovo and the municipal authorities in Peje on a range of practical issues.

The lack of security undermines efforts to bring the Serbian and Kosovar communities together. It has a negative impact on the decision of displaced persons and refugees from northern Kosovo whether or not to return and reintegrate. Togo therefore urges the Kosovo authorities to continue the investigations under way into the cases of attacks against the Serbian residents of Kosovo and their property in order to bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts and to provide the necessary compensation to victims.

On the issue of disappeared persons, my country welcomes the visit to Cyprus on 7 and 8 November 2012 of members of the Kosovo Serb family associations of missing persons, who were able to learn from the experience of Cyprus in that area. We look forward to the rapid implementation of the recommendations arising from that visit, which underscore the importance of ownership of such activities by the populations themselves and of the involvement of family associations in all discussions and decisions on the issue.

Togo is also concerned about the phenomenon of corruption and organized crime that are developing

widely, in particular in northern Kosovo. We call on the Kosovo authorities to do their utmost to fight effectively against that scourge. We note the decision taken by the Kosovo authorities in that regard, as stated by Mr. Thaçi. We believe that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) should have the appropriate staffing in order to further focus on preventing and suppressing that scourge.

Moreover, with regard to the allegations of trafficking in human organs, we again call on Kosovo and its neighbours to allow the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force to work in peace and to fully cooperate with it. We hope that the investigations undertaken by Prosecutor Williamson can be rapidly concluded in as impartial a way as possible in order to once and for all shed light on that case, which is dividing peoples and views.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my country's congratulations to the European Union, UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, EULEX, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and all partner organizations that continue to work alongside the Kosovo authorities in order to prevent tension and to promote the adoption of consensus solutions by playing an important role in mediation and in facilitating dialogue.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/72). We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report and Mr. Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

The Secretary-General's report once again affirms that the United Nations continues to play an essential role in guaranteeing stability and neutrality in Kosovo and the region. We reaffirm the primacy of resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal framework applicable in Kosovo, as well as the importance of full respect for international law.

During the reporting period, we note the progress in the dialogue between the parties. We congratulate them not only on the level of the dialogue but also on its quality, which has moved from a primarily technical level to a political one, providing new prospects for resolving several long-standing problems. The Secretary-General's report also points out that, despite the developments in the high-level dialogue, incidents and tensions on the ground continue to occur. It is therefore important that the results of the dialogue have a positive impact on the reality on the ground, in particular in the north.

In that regard, we regret that the parties were unable to reach an agreement with regard to the situation in northern Kosovo at the recent round of talks on 20 March in Brussels. We encourage the parties to continue those efforts, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), at the next round, to be held on 2 April.

Northern Kosovo remains a source of concern to my delegation. With regard to the security situation, we note that to date this year there have been more than 20 incidents using explosive devices. The report documents serious incidents that also affected the staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It also reports on the arrests and mistreatment of Kosovo Serbs during the Christmas celebrations on 7 January. It is important that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the Kosovo Force and the local authorities investigate each of those incidents. We are pleased that those entities have increased their visibility and prevention activities in response to such incidents.

In addition, we are concerned about the situation of the administrative office in Mitrovica. We regret the freeze on the payment of salaries from the Kosovo budget to the employees of that office. Given the important work that UNMIK is doing to ensure coordination and cooperation among the international presences in the north, it is necessary to find solutions to enable its administration to continue to carry out its prevention, mediation and facilitation functions.

On that same point, we would like to comment in general terms on the importance of UNMIK having the necessary resources to achieve its operational capacity and to implement its mandate. UNMIK operates in a vulnerable situation with limited resources. A strong United Nations presence with the appropriate resources remains necessary given the prevailing situation on the ground, in particular in northern Kosovo.

We were surprised by the information the Security Council has received about refusals to allow Serbian authorities to enter Kosovo, including the recent hostile treatment of the Director of the Serbian Office for Kosovo and Metohija. Such behaviour has an adverse impact on the situation of minority communities in Kosovo. It is worth recalling that UNMIK's goal is to promote security, stability and respect for human rights

in Kosovo, with the participation of all its communities. Kosovo's multi-ethnic character will be undermined by the lack of mechanisms capable of assuring and protecting the rights of those populations. Moreover, it has a negative effect on the rate of those returning voluntarily to Kosovo.

Turning to the work of the Special Investigative Task Force in addressing the allegations of inhumane treatment of persons and trafficking in human organs, we note with interest the information included in the annexed EULEX report and have followed progress on the matter closely. We support the objectives of operational cooperation and therefore continue to believe that it would be desirable to reach an arrangement that could involve the United Nations in the process of investigating the allegations. We agree on the importance of tackling impunity and ensuring accountability.

We conclude by affirming that beyond the high-level political process, it is equally important that sustained and well-funded efforts be made to promote reconciliation and build trust among the communities. In that regard, we support the Special Representative's efforts to promote consensus solutions and expand cooperation among the principal stakeholders.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo, for his briefing on recent developments in Kosovo. I welcome the presence here and participation of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

Progress has been made on the situation in Kosovo in various areas, which, while they may be technical, are politically highly symbolic. In fact, the joint agreement on the integrated management of crossing points, the highway construction project and the appointment of liaison officers for the European Union delegation offices are measures that will have a direct effect on Kosovo's communities and their daily life. This progress has been achieved under the auspices of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, whose commitment and perseverance enabled high-level talks to be held between the parties. In that context, we encourage the parties to continue to negotiate in a spirit of compromise so as to reach a satisfactory result as quickly as possible. It is predictable and understandable that implementation of these measures may meet with resistance and create friction, but it is crucial that the leaders on both sides stay the course and move forward by soothing fears and, if necessary, adjusting the arrangements agreed on. The momentum of reconciliation of the various interests and building trust must be maintained and strengthened.

That the progress that has been achieved in this way unquestionably marks an important stage in the negotiation process between the parties should in no way mask the persisting tensions on the ground, particularly in northern Kosovo, where incidents affecting minorities continue to occur. Where these include, in particular, incidents of disrespect for cultural and religious sites, which are still a frequent source of tension, it is essential that a spirit of religious tolerance be maintained and peaceful existence between communities promoted. In that regard, we commend the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in restoring and protecting minority religious sites.

Regarding the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, that body continues to investigate issues connected with organized crime, war crimes and corruption. In that context, the allegations of trafficking in human organs are still extremely worrying.

This region has endured many conflicts that have claimed many victims, who continue to suffer the consequences of war and fratricidal conflict. Today it is up to the parties to continue to strive to resolve their differences and to work towards what we hope will be a prosperous future for the generations to come. In that regard, we commend the commitment and efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, which continue to play a very important role between the parties with the goal of moving forward on the issues that divide them and, above all, to work towards a political solution that is comprehensive, inclusive and in accord with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Dačić; I have also listened carefully to Mr. Thaçi's statement.

China has always maintained that Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be fully respected. Resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal

foundation for addressing the question of Kosovo. That task should be carried out within the framework of the relevant resolutions and through dialogue and negotiation between the parties concerned so as to reach a mutually acceptable solution. China welcomes the many rounds of high-level political dialogue that have been held recently between Belgrade and Pristina and that have made good progress. We hope that both parties will remain committed to promoting constructive dialogue, try to reach agreement on issues in the relevant areas, and seek a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo that will help maintain peace and stability in the Balkans and in Europe generally.

At present, the security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but in the north tensions remain, and we are very worried about the situation. The parties concerned should adopt a prudent attitude, stick to dialogue to settle their differences and refrain from any action that might worsen the situation. China appreciates the work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the Special Representative, and supports its continuing efforts to implement the Council's mandate. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo Force, the Kosovo and the other international presences will strengthen their coordination in order to ensure that they play a positive and constructive role in settling the relevant issues.

China is very concerned about illegal trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. Any activities contravening international law or international humanitarian standards should be met with zero tolerance. The United Nations should play its part in a comprehensive and independent investigation of such cases.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo for their statements.

Naturally, my country remains committed to the reality of a sovereign, peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, living in peace with its neighbours. Our hope therefore is that Serbia and Kosovo can find an agreement that would allow them to definitively close the chapter on their conflict, work towards their European future and contribute to stabilizing the Balkans.

That is why the European Union is promoting dialogue between the two countries; the meeting held on Wednesday, 20 March, in Brussels has confirmed that we were close to an agreement. That is major progress, and we encourage both sides to finalize discussions by each making the necessary compromises. We thank Mr. Dačić and Mr. Thaçi for the information they have just provided us with respect to the meeting, and we commend their determination to find an agreement.

Thus, considerable progress has been made in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. That dialogue is being held at the level of Heads of Government, and is addressing the most sensitive issues. We offer all our support to the efforts of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union, Ms. Catherine Ashton, to promote that dialogue.

We need to move towards a long-term solution on the issue of northern Kosovo. The outlines are known. Serbia must dismantle the parallel structures that it maintains there, and Kosovo, for its part, must provide security assurances and substantial autonomy that would win the acceptance of the Serbian populations concerned, which would entail a degree of decentralization, the scope of which would be agreed upon by both sides.

Parallel to that, it is important that the technical agreements that have been reached be implemented and that an agreement be reached on other issues that have been identified, particularly on energy and telecommunications. If the conditions defined in the conclusions of the European Council of December 2012 are met, we could enter a new phase of the European rapprochement for the two countries, which means the launch of European Union accession talks for Serbia and a stabilization and association agreement for Kosovo.

We call on the authorities of Serbia and of Kosovo to remain committed to this historic process and to prepare the public for concessions in each stage. We know that this is never easy, and we specifically commend the recent courageous statements of the Prime Minister of Serbia and the resolute commitment of Mr. Thaçi to the dialogue, which does not enjoy unanimous support in Kosovo.

On the ground, the security situation in Kosovo remains calm overall, although incidents continue to take place, particularly in the northern part of the country. As is recalled in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/72), it is critical to consolidate the rights of the different communities within Kosovo, to protect their

cultural and religious heritage, and to guarantee the return of the 18,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in appropriate conditions of security and reintegration.

We firmly condemn the recent desecration of Serbian cemeteries, and any attack against orthodox religious and cultural sites. Such acts must not go unpunished.

With the end of supervized independence and the establishment of the administrative office in northern Mitrovica, it is normal and desirable that the international presence should adapt to the new realities on the ground. We call on all parties to cooperate with international organizations. It is essential that the authorities of Kosovo cooperate actively with the Special Representative of the European Union and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) on the rule of law, especially with respect to the investigation into alleged trafficking of human organs. In that regard, I welcome the fact that EULEX continues to provide to the Security Council information on progress made in this investigation, as provided in the report of the Secretary-General.

We would also like to reiterate that the soldiers and personnel deployed within the Kosovo Force and EULEX are instructed to ensure the respect for the freedom of movement within Kosovo. Any impediment to their own freedom of movement or physical security is unacceptable. At a time when the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are adapting their presence to conditions on the ground, we call on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to do the same in a spirit of subsidiarity in order to contribute to a peaceful evolution of behaviour, in accord with the Kosovo authorities, without letting themselves be used by the defenders of the status quo.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the personnel of the UNMIK in Kosovo for their work.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zarif, for his briefing. I would like to welcome both Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi back to the Council and to thank them for sharing their perspectives with us.

I would also like to express again our appreciation to the European Union (EU), NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other organizations that, alongside the United Nations, are supporting the international community's work in Kosovo. I would like to congratulate Kosovo on the fifth anniversary of its independence on 17 February.

The United States commends Kosovo and Serbia for their efforts in the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue towards a normalization of their relations. Prime Ministers Thaçi and Dačić have shown courage in working to resolve long-standing issues through a pragmatic approach that will improve the lives of their citizens, bring greater stability to the region and allow both countries to move forward on their respective paths to European integration.

The United States very much welcomes the progress made in the seven rounds of the dialogue, and we understand that the Prime Ministers are close to concluding an agreement on northern Kosovo. We encourage them to do so at the next dialogue session on 2 April. Both parties, with the assistance of the international community, should quickly and fully implement any agreement ultimately reached. Those efforts will continue to require much cooperation and hard work.

Further, we applaud the continued implementation of the arrangements under the integrated management of crossing points agreement, and look forward to the exchange of liaison officers to serve in the respective capitals. Such agreements are proof that the dialogue is producing results. We call on both Kosovo and Serbia to sustain the momentum towards normalization that their leaders have built in recent months.

We also commend the significant progress Kosovo has made in modernizing the justice sector. The new court structure, criminal code and criminal procedure code are major steps forward. We encourage the Government of Kosovo, in coordination with its partner the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to continue to prioritize reforms in that sector and to increase efforts to address corruption, strengthen judicial independence and remedy inefficiencies, which would contribute to increased public confidence in the legal system and improved justice.

Kosovo's recent adoption of laws to increase the transparency and accountability of financial transactions will, once fully implemented, help Kosovo

to combat corruption and organized crime, promote the country's growth and help to ensure the independence of its institutions more broadly. Further, we continue to support the Special Investigative Task Force in its work to investigate allegations of organ trafficking and other wrongdoing. We reaffirm our belief in the Task Force's capacity and commitment to operating consistently with established investigative and prosecutorial practices and in the interest of justice.

While the progress at the political level has been significant, the United States remains concerned about continuing security incidents, especially in the north. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2013/72), the overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities declined in 2012. Still, we are disturbed by the uptick of violent acts in recent months, much of which appears intended to harass and threaten those who are cooperating with Kosovo authorities to normalize relations. Those acts represent a serious threat to peace and security. They must not be tolerated. Of great concern is a string of grenade attacks in northern Kosovo that has targeted EULEX staff, officials at the borders and Kosovo Serbs.

In addition, an ongoing pattern of violence in northern Mitrovica against personnel employed by Kosovo institutions and their families, particularly against Kosovo Serb employees of the northern Mitrovica administrative office undermines safety, security and the rule of law, and hurts the ordinary citizens of the north, whom that administrative office is trying to help. The United States continues to support the office's work to improve the delivery of services to the citizens of northern Mitrovica, and hopes that UNMIK will support those efforts.

We also insist on zero tolerance for vandalism, the desecration of religious sites, intimidation and targeted violence, and condemn the desecration of grave sites in Kosovo that occurred in reaction to the removal by the Serbian Government of a monument in southern Serbia. The United States welcomed the prompt condemnation and assurances by Kosovo authorities that those criminal acts would be investigated fully and the perpetrators prosecuted, as well as the Government's commitment to restore the grave sites at Government expense.

As the Prime Ministers continue talks under the auspices of High Representative Ashton in less than two weeks, it will be important to seize the opportunities presented by the dialogue to move beyond the past and look toward their common European futures. The United States will continue to support them and the EU facilitation efforts towards that end.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): As I begin my remarks, allow me to welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

In his report, the Secretary-General underscores the constructive approach taken and the pragmatism shown by the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade in the high-level political dialogue held under the aegis of the European Union. The most recent session of that dialogue was held the day before yesterday in Brussels, with the participation of the two Prime Ministers. We welcome the progress made at that meeting, and we hope that it will be made concrete at the next meeting, scheduled for 2 April.

Luxembourg firmly supports the efforts by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, as facilitator of that dialogue. I would like to join the Secretary-General in commending Serbian and Kosovar leaders for having committed themselves to the path of dialogue, which has allowed for concrete results to be achieved on the ground since the most recent debate of the Council on this issue (see S/PV.6872). I would like to note in particular the effective implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points as it relates to gates 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 31 of the agreement. Those efforts should be continued and the achievements to date consolidated on the ground.

The meeting between the Presidents of Kosovo and Serbia that took place on 6 February in Brussels in the presence of Baroness Ashton, the first since the declaration of independence by Kosovo, was an important st towards the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Much progress towards peace and stability has been made since UNMIK's establishment, in 1999, by virtue of resolution 1244 (1999). The context in which the Mission and the other international missions are operating, including the European Union Rule of Law

Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), has radically changed. The security conditions in Kosovo are evolving in a positive direction. In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General underscores that, on the whole, the security situation is calm, with the exception of the north of Kosovo. In particular, in northern Mitrovica, several serious incidents have been reported, in particular acts of violence against Kosovo Serbs and incidents targeting the personnel, assets and projects of the administrative office put in place by the Kosovar authorities in northern Mitrovica.

We are concerned by the recent acts of vandalism targeting Orthodox religious sites, and we firmly condemn all acts of intolerance. While the total number of incidents affecting minority groups has diminished, there must be a redoubling of efforts to ensure peaceful coexistence between the different population groups in Kosovo. No effort should be spared to minimize tension, particularly in northern Kosovo. In that connection, I commend the work of UNMIK and EULEX in support of the Kosovar authorities, including the participation of EULEX in the recruitment of the new multi-ethnic police unit that will be charged with protecting religious sites.

The European Union is determined to continue its support for Kosovo. The extension of the EULEX mandate through June 2014 will allow the European Union Mission to continue with its capacity-building efforts in the area of the rule of law and help the Kosovar authorities to undertake prosecutions against the authors of war crimes, as well as to step up the fight against corruption and organized crime. We welcome the significant work undertaken by the Special Investigative Task Force of EULEX to consolidate the high-level support it has in all of the countries of the region and to prepare for the operational phase of the investigation into allegations of organ trafficking set out in the report of Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty and into the information provided on that subject to the Security Council.

For its part, Luxembourg remains committed to the stability of Kosovo through its participation in the Kosovo Force, to the development of the rule of law through its contribution to EULEX and to the socioeconomic development of the country through a major cooperation programme focused on professional training in the areas of water management and health.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm our deeply held conviction that the future of Kosovo, as that of Serbia, must take place in a resolutely European context. My country is prepared to continue to support the efforts of those two countries and their leaders in order to achieve those common objectives.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am delighted to also welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, and His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia.

Kosovo continues to make progress, both internally and on the international stage. We encourage those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so.

The United Kingdom welcomes Kosovo's progress towards meeting the short-term conditionality, set out at the December 2012 European Union (EU) General Affairs Council session, for opening negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. The implementation of the conditionality is crucial for sustainable reform and for Kosovo's continued progress towards a more secure and prosperous future. Active engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue is vital to Kosovo's EU accession path. In that respect, the United Kingdom welcomes Baroness Ashton's personal engagement and the tangible progress made in the dialogue, particularly with regard to integrated border management. The continued assistance of EULEX in the implementation of dialogue agreements is indispensable. We continue to urge full cooperation with EULEX by the authorities, in both Pristina and Belgrade.

I would like to echo the words of Baroness Ashton by paying tribute to both Prime Ministers for the courage, vision and determination they have shown over the past five months in that dialogue. I also welcome the commitment they have each expressed today to the success of that process. They are on the brink of a historic agreement that will open a new chapter in Serbia/Kosovo relations and ensure that both countries make progress towards the European Union in a more cooperative and stable manner. There is more work to do. It is crucial that an agreement be reached on 2 April and that its implementation begin immediately. Serbia must do all it can to ensure agreements are communicated to, and accepted by, the local communities in northern Kosovo. Kosovo must make greater efforts to show that

it is working in support of the rights and culture of all its minority communities.

The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/72) indicates a reduction in 2012, compared to the previous year, in the overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities. We hope that trend will continue and, indeed, intensify. There is of course no room for complacency in that area. The United Kingdom was deeply concerned by the violence in Kosovo that followed the removal of the monument in Presevo in January. Those attacks were completely unacceptable, and it was right for the international community and the Government of Kosovo to universally condemn them. All the perpetrators of those acts should be arrested and brought to justice. In that respect, we welcome the suspension of five police officers in Viti/Vitina who allegedly did not adequately respond to the removal of a monument from the Second World War, and the arrest of five individuals on the suspicion of having desecrated a Serbian Orthodox cemetery. Kosovo must continue to combat illegal activities and violence committed against all of its communities, and must investigate fully when incidents do occur.

While socioeconomic factors remain the overriding consideration for individuals returning to Kosovo, the Government must continue on its commitment to creating the conditions necessary for sustainable returns. The United Kingdom remains committed to the returns process through political engagement and bilateral projects.

The United Kingdom welcomes the comprehensive update in the EULEX annex to the work being carried out by the Special Investigative Task Force. We continue to support the important work carried out into the serious allegations made in the Marty report. We are confident in the Task Force capacity and its determination to take forward this important investigation.

I welcome the update in the Secretary-General's report concerning the high-level round table on the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, involving the Kosovo Government, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and other international representatives. I welcome the work of UN-Women in organizing this round table. Initiative preventing and responding to sexual violence are a priority for the Government of the United Kingdom. We will give strong support to efforts that address the challenge posed by this tragic legacy of past conflict in a number of countries, including Kosovo.

Let me take this opportunity to thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his continuing efforts to drive down the UNMIK budget. At a time when countries across the world are having to face tough decisions regarding cuts to their own national budgets, it is only right that the United Nations and its institutions respond accordingly. I encourage Special Representative Zarif to make further efforts to identify cost savings in the future.

Important though budgetary rigour is, I would not want to end my remarks on that note. Let me re-emphasize the United Kingdom's commitment to the irreversible progress of both Kosovo and Serbia to EU membership. We hope that both deliver on the conditions set out at the December General Affairs Council in order to move forward on their respective EU accession paths. We welcome the continued constructive engagement by both Belgrade and Pristina in the dialogue and look forward to further tangible results.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his detailed presentation of that report. We welcome the participation today of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and of Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

We welcome the fact that the report of the Secretary-General underlines the positive role that the United Nations continues to play in Kosovo though UNMIK, promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, and collaborating with other international actors. Argentina voted in favour of resolution 1244 (1999) when we were member of the Security Council, and believes that it should continue to serve as the international legal basis for achieving a general solution in Kosovo through a fertile political process and fair and specific negotiations.

We cannot fail to welcome the high-level dialogue process between the parties, under the auspices of the European Union, which held its seventh meeting in Brussels just two days ago. We trust that the willingness to engage in constructive dialogue shown by Belgrade and Pristina will contribute to the stabilization of the

situation and the political resolution of the contentious issues.

We welcome the commitment and decision of both parties to promote dialogue as an import factor for building confidence. The efforts of Serbia to promote dialogue and the normalization of relations deserve special recognition. We urge both parties to continue in that spirit, in keeping with resolution 1244 (1999), and hope for a successful outcome of the meeting to be held on 2 April. In that respect, we endorse the Secretary-General's assertion in his report that the resumption of talks is in itself a clear signal that both parties are resolved to maintain peaceful dialogue and overcome the scars of the conflict of the past.

In this context, we believe it crucial that UNMIK continue carrying out its mandate and the important role it plays in complement to dialogue so as to guarantee the effective exchange of information and the presentation of reports to the Council. We support the role of UNMIK and its contribution to stabilizing the region, as well as the cooperation between UNMIK, the Kosovo Force and European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, maintaining a status-neutral position under the auspices of the United Nations.

Argentina has been following closely the financial situation of the United Nations administrative office in Mitrovica. It is unacceptable that a lack of funds is having an adverse impact on its mandate. As the Secretary-General is right to point out, the situation in northern Mitrovica calls for coordinated attention and action in order to ensure that the difficult problems are resolved in good faith so as to avoid future tensions.

This is why, given the important work of UNMIK to ensure coordination and cooperation between international actors with regard to northern Mitrovica within their respective mandates, there is a need to find practical solutions, prevent tension and ensure that its administration continues carrying out conflict prevention, mediation and facilitation functions. We therefore call on UNMIK to continue to be granted the necessary resources to avoid a negative impact on the valuable work it carries out, which deserves our full recognition.

We are concerned that, despite progress in the high-level dialogue, serious incidents and tension continue to occur on the ground, especially in the north. It is therefore crucial for the high-level dialogue to have a positive impact on the ground. We cannot but agree with the Secretary-General that, in addition to the political process, it is equally important for sustained efforts to be made to promote reconciliation and increase trust between the communities of Kosovo.

For Argentina, strengthening the respect for the human rights of all communities in Kosovo is of fundamental importance, as is bringing an end to acts of intolerance and guaranteeing the swift return of internally displaced persons. In our view, it is of the utmost importance to ensure full respect for the human rights of displaced persons returning to their places of origin, so that they may access and exercise their substantive rights and not fall victim to various forms of violence or discrimination, in particular in cases of undocumented returnees, who remain stateless. We therefore assign great importance to the technical assistance that UNMIK can provide in this context.

It is equally essential to strengthen policies aimed at ending the discrimination suffered by various communities, such as the Roma, Ashkali and small Egyptian communities. The protection of cultural and religious heritage must continue to be a priority for UNMIK. While progress has been made in this area, we remain concerned by the occurrence of vandalism and religious intolerance, which should be firmly and effectively condemned.

We also support and follow closely the work of the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force created in 2011 to investigate reports of the inhumane treatment of people and human organ trafficking in Kosovo. We reaffirm the importance of tackling impunity and ensuring accountability in a framework of cooperation with the United Nations. It is important to underscore the role of EULEX and UNMIK in investigating the crimes committed during the armed conflict, with a view to ending the impunity that persists to this day.

I should like to conclude by once again highlighting the crucial importance of UNMIK's work in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). We commend Special Representative Farid Zarif for his efforts. We trust that the political dialogue that is now under way will contribute to stability and reconciliation, facilitate consensual solutions and strengthen confidence among Kosovo's community, thereby making possible peaceful progress and lasting prosperity.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): I should like to thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his briefing this morning. I should also like to welcome to the Council Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the ongoing negotiations process between Belgrade and Pristina on the normalization of relations. It is encouraging that both sides have demonstrated seriousness and firm political will to engage in the dialogue. We also applaud the positive contributions of the European Union in facilitating the high-level meetings. We are especially grateful for the personal commitment to this issue on the part of High Representative Ashton. While the recent meeting in Brussels ended inconclusively, we believe that such dialogue itself marks an important step. Such high-level engagement has already led to early results on the ground. Specifically, we are pleased at the implementation of the integrated border management agreement, with the opening of the four crossing points on the border of northern Kosovo. We encourage both sides to continue the dialogue to resolve remaining differences. We sincerely hope that further tangible progress will be made at the next meeting, on 2 April.

Turning to the security situation in Kosovo, the overall security situation has remained calm and stable. However, the recent unrest and fragile security situation in northern Kosovo remains a serious concern. There have been a number of violent protests against the border agreement. In addition, we are also concerned about multiple incidents targeting minorities. With that shared concern, we encourage the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to further strengthen its cooperation with other international agencies and local authorities in monitoring the situation and reducing tensions on the ground.

Another serious concern is the growing number of incidents of religious intolerance. In spite of the efforts to the Kosovo Police and the Kosovo Force, incidents involving the desecration of graves and Orthodox cemeteries and the vandalism of religious of religious and cultural heritage sites continued to be reported. Such acts are unacceptable and need to be addressed resolutely.

Those incidents and the increased tensions between ethnic groups pose obstacles to the reconciliation process and the progress achieved so far. As such, we urge the authorities in Kosovo to investigate such incidents thoroughly, work towards bringing all perpetrators to justice and take all the necessary preventive measures.

Confidence-building among communities is indispensable in the entire process towards normalization and long-term reconciliation. In spite of the significant progress and the political dialogue, we have seen major challenges stemming from misunderstanding a lack of trust. Therefore, the political dialogue should take place parallel to confidence-building measures, including through educational initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns. To that end, it is crucial that the authorities of Kosovo integrate and embrace their citizens in the north, as well as the ethnic minority groups.

In addition, public trust in the fairness and credibility of law-enforcement agencies will be decisive in building a harmonious, multi-ethnic society. Respect for norms and standards and a strengthened role for legal institutions will prevent minor incidents from escalating into inter-communal clashes. In that context, we encourage the Kosovo authorities to continue to strengthen the national rule of law and to build institutional capabilities in close coordination with the European Rule of Law Mission.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Special Representative Zarif and UNMIK for their commitment and efforts to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo and the region.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif for his briefing. We have taken note of the report (S/2013/72) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, to the Security Council and thank them for their statements.

There has been intense engagement between the two Prime Ministers during the current reporting period. We are encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by both sides to resolve their differences through peaceful means. We would like to commend the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, for her tireless efforts to bring the two sides closer to an agreement. Dialogue offers the best means

to address the outstanding issues between Kosovo and Serbia and reach mutually acceptable solutions. We therefore urge both sides to maintain the momentum of the dialogue process and seize the present window of opportunity by making the necessary compromises. We sincerely hope that the next round of talks on 2 April will lead to an agreement.

The report of the Secretary-General notes that the high-level engagement between the two sides has resulted in the start of the implementation of the agreement on integrated border management at four of the six crossing points. The full implementation of the agreement will help to address a key source of discord that has caused much of the violence witnessed over the last year and a half. Implementation of the other agreements concluded with the facilitation of the European Union would also serve to enhance mutual confidence and help the dialogue process.

The security situation in Kosovo has remained calm. However, the north continued to see some violence. The overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities has decreased. All such incidents should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Incidents involving the vandalism of religious sites, damage and theft at Orthodox churches, and the desecration of Orthodox graves continue to be reported. Such incidents are harmful to intercommunal relations and must be addressed.

The Kosovo police should ensure that it equally provides for security for all communities inhabiting the country. The adoption of the community policing and action plan is a step in the right direction. The creation of conditions for the peaceful integration of minority communities and sustainable returns is essential for building the foundation for long-term reconciliation. It would help in convincing the Kosovo Serbs that they share a common future with the Albanians.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment of the need for well-grounded efforts aimed at promoting reconciliation among the communities in Kosovo alongside the political process. That will require sincere efforts on the part of the leadership on both sides. We therefore encourage political leaders in both countries to reach out to their respective constituencies in order to prepare them for the difficult decisions and painful compromises ahead.

Finally, UNMIK continues to play a vital role in ensuring stability in Kosovo. We would like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for their dedication and hard work in the service of peace in Kosovo.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report (S/2013/72) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Serbian Prime Minister, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank him and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

Azerbaijan's position with regard to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and the non-recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence remain unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the binding international legal basis for a comprehensive settlement through a political process and negotiations.

In that connection, we commend the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina for their commitment and determination to achieve substantial progress in the dialogue facilitated by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to agree on some of the most difficult issues during the meeting held in Brussels on 20 March. We encourage the sides to remain committed to reaching agreements through a mutually acceptable solution and to make further progress during the next meeting, scheduled for 2 April. The successful outcome of the dialogue is indispensable so as to move forward in overcoming the burden of the past, normalizing relations and bringing about lasting stability for the region.

We emphasize the utmost importance of UNMIK's presence and activities in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, during the reporting period the Mission continued to work closely with the communities on the ground and to collaborate with all other mandated international presences to enhance the prospects of success in the political dialogue. It is important that UNMIK maintain and further develop its key role in ensuring the coordination of all international efforts under its status-neutral framework, as is envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999).

According to the report, the overall security situation remained generally calm during the reporting

period, with the exception of northern Kosovo, where some serious incidents were reported. Indeed, ethnically motivated attacks and violence, acts of vandalism of religious sites and other forms of religious intolerance have continued, affecting first and foremost the rights and freedoms of minority communities in Kosovo. Needless to say, the atmosphere of impunity for such violations will hardly contribute to enhancing public confidence or to building the foundation for long-term reconciliation.

The voluntary return of internally displaced persons to Kosovo again showed few signs of improvement during the reporting period. At the same time, we commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to promote dialogue between potential returnees and the receiving communities. According to the report, some progress was also made in the provision of municipal support for housing construction and refurbishment, as well as in the implementation of the UNHCR return and reintegration project. These are encouraging developments that should be further supported and promoted.

We agree with the Secretary-General that of equal importance to the high-level political process are sustained and well-grounded efforts to promote reconciliation and to increase trust among the communities in Kosovo. In that regard, the preservation of the region's rich cultural diversity and the further promotion of its cultural and spiritual heritage on the basis of ethnic and religious tolerance should undoubtedly remain one of the key objectives.

The establishment of tools and the strengthening of the principle of justice and the rule of law are also imperative to building confidence and achieving a lasting political settlement. In that regard, we take note of the information regarding the ongoing criminal investigation by the Special Investigative Task Force into the report related to a wide range of alleged criminal offences, including organized crime, the inhuman treatment of people and organ trafficking. We are encouraged by the high-level political commitments throughout the region to support the investigation conducted by the Task Force.

We note also that during the reporting period UNMIK continued to support and encourage progress on the issue of missing persons, which remains one of the essential aspects of reconciliation. We encourage the sides and international partners to intensify their efforts and enhance coordination to that end.

In conclusion, I should like to commend UNMIK, under the leadership of Special Representative Zarif, for its efforts and for its important role in the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo and the entire region.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to thank Special Representative Zarif for his presentation this morning and for the participation in today's debate by Prime Ministers Dačić and Thaçi and for their remarks. We warmly welcome them both.

Given that this is the first time that Australia has spoken in a debate on Kosovo in the Council, I would like to state Australia's support for an independent and sovereign Kosovo. While we recognize that there is not a unanimity of views within the Council on this question, Australia wishes to note that it was one of the first few countries to recognize Kosovo's independence, in February 2008.

We commend the leadership displayed by both Prime Ministers in elevating the European Union-mediated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina to the highest political level. That has been essential. Of course, it is not an easy process, but we are very encouraged by their personal and constructive contribution to seven rounds of trilateral negotiations, including in Brussels this week.

The discussions between the Prime Ministers builds on other recent positive developments, including the meeting between Presidents Nikolić and Jahjaga in early February, which was a powerful symbol of the commitment of both parties to continuing their dialogue so as to find a long-term solution. Trust-building and reconciliation among communities in Kosovo is, obviously, a vital complement to the political process.

The role of the European Union (EU) and High Representative Ashton has been decisive in advancing the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. We commend those ongoing endeavours, which have achieved genuine results, including the commencement of the integrated agreement on the management of crossing points and customs, and the exchange of liaison officers based in the EU delegations in Belgrade and Pristina. Both countries have a European future.

We welcome the strong endorsement of the process provided by both the National Assembly of Serbia and the authorities of the Republic of Kosovo, which has

sent powerful messages to their own communities on the fundamental importance to the futures of both countries of a successful outcome to the negotiations.

The security situation in northern Kosovo, particularly around northern Mitrovica, remains fragile. Both sides need to do more and to work harder to improve the situation in the north. We condemn acts of vandalism against significant cultural and religious heritage sites. The prompt reaction by local authorities, the condemnation of violence by all political parties and the swift action of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) have helped to prevent further incidents, and we commend those actions. We encourage all sides to take steps to protect Kosovo's rich and diverse heritage, including that of the Serbian Orthodox and Muslim communities, on the basis of ethnic and religious tolerance. We also encourage the unimpeded resettlement of minority returnees and internally displaced persons in Kosovo. That is vital.

Australia would also like to express its appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif and the United Nations Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their efforts to ensure a consistent approach by the international presence in Kosovo. We have to be frank about this. UNMIK's job, as mandated by the Council, is a difficult one, but its work has complemented strongly the efforts by the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), KFOR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and helped to provide the stability to support direct political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. We support the ongoing investigation by EULEX into the allegations of organ trafficking, and we support the calls for any persons implicated in war crimes to be held accountable.

To conclude, a broad and substantial political settlement to the question of Kosovo is now within reach, and Australia joins the Secretary-General and other Council members in encouraging both Prime Ministers to continue their dialogue with a determination to bring about lasting stability, not only in Kosovo and between Serbia and Kosovo, but in the broader Balkan region.

We look forward to progress on remaining sensitive issues, such as the governing institutions in northern Kosovo, at the next round of EU-mediated dialogue in April. Following that, it will be important that both parties leverage the confidence and trust that they have so painstakingly created to achieve actual implementation of the agreements reached at a political level. For our part, we believe that the Security Council and the international community generally stand ready to assist the parties on their path to reconciliation, security and stability.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Zarif for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in this meeting of Prime Minister Dačić of Serbia. We share his assessments. We listened very closely to Mr. Thaçi, as well.

Russia's position with respect to the non-recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force as the mandatory international legal basis for a comprehensive settlement of the Kosovo issue. We anticipate that the dialogue to be held at the highest political level between Belgrade and Pristina, under European Union mediation, will contribute to a long-term settlement of the issue of Kosovo. At the same time, the Security Council still has the final word.

The United Nations Mission is the core international civilian presence in Kosovo and must carry out its functions in full, in accordance with its mandate under the Security Council. To that end, it must be endowed with all the necessary capacities and resources.

We believe that Kosovo made a serious mistake in its decision to establish a new administrative office in northern Mitrovica, which is financed, inter alia, with resources assigned earlier to UNMIK administrative tasks in the northern part of the city. That decision has raised additional tensions in northern Mitrovica.

There has been a series of inter-ethnic and sectarian incidents in Kosovo. Unfortunately, the most flagrant of those do not receive due consideration or analysis in the Secretary-General's report. The wave of anti-Serbian acts that swept through Kosovo in January recalls the tragic events of March 2004. We are particularly concerned about the events that took place at the time of the Serbian Orthodox Christmas in Kosovo. The detention and beating of Serbian believers who arrived at Gračanica — in addition, reports have said that took place in the courthouse building

in Pristina — have again demonstrated the inability of international entities, above all the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to appropriately withstand acts of provocation by the Kosovar Albanian authorities. Two months have already passed. What are the results of the investigation? Was it neutral and impartial? We are concerned about the widespread attacks against Serbian cemeteries, which have resulted in the desecration of more than 150 grave sites in more than a dozen municipalities.

There was also an arson attack against a church in the town of Obilić, as well as an attempt to burn down a Serbian city hall building in Mitrovica. In that context, the incident that stands out is the memorial to victims of the Second World War, which was blown up in the town of Vitina. We view that as an act of desecration against the memory of the victims of fascism and those who fought against it.

Over and over again, we have drawn attention to the fact that progress on the issue of the resettlement of Serbian refugees and internally displaced persons is essentially nonexistent. An analysis of that situation demonstrates that the Kosovar Albanian authorities systematically impede their return to the province, the restoration of their property rights and compliance with internationally recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms.

There is a conscious effort to create conditions aimed at pushing the remaining Serbian population out of Serbia, under the threat of reprisals, which is a kind of ethnic cleansing by peaceful means, with all the ensuing consequences.

We hope that in future reports on UNMIK and on the situation in the province there will be an objective picture drawn of the situation of the Serbian population in Kosovo. We call on Mr. Zarif to provide a fundamental assessment of the situation and to take an active stance in accordance with his mandate.

The Russian Federation emphasizes that the decisions taken with respect to northern Kosovo must take into account the view of the local Serbian population. If that is not done, compromises will remain only on paper.

Without genuine steps carried out in the areas of inter-ethnic dialogue and confidence-building, the prospects for a multiethnic society in Kosovo are unrealistic.

We draw attention to the fact that, in the report, attention is focused on the pace of the investigation of the incidents reported by Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty on the illegal trafficking of human organs in Kosovo. However, that is not enough. We are looking forward to results. All perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice. If EULEX does not have sufficient capacity to ensure an effective, objective and impartial investigation, we will not remove that issue from the United Nations agenda.

Under the mandate of the Security Council, KFOR bears core responsibility for the maintenance of security in the province. Any change in its function or format must be approved by the Council.

We hope that NATO will recognize the possible consequences of the transfer of KFOR's responsibility for the safety and security of Orthodox monasteries in the southern part of the province to Pristina's law enforcement entities, and therefore carry out effective measures aimed at avoiding sectarian or inter-ethnic clashes.

We have repeatedly discussed the distressing situation in the provinces home to Serbian Orthodox churches, which have been the subject of vandalism and attacks on their clergy. That problem calls for focused attention. The situation is totally intolerable with respect to the Visoki Dečani Monastery, which UNESCO has designated as a World Heritage Site. Local authorities are inciting the populace to protest with a demand to confiscate the land of the Monastery. The decisions of the Kosovo courts have been ignored, as have the calls of the international community.

We are concerned about statements regarding this year's conversion of the Kosovo security force into a full-fledged armed force. The Kosovo security force consists essentially of Albanians, the majority of whom were earlier militia members. We view that as a potential threat to regional stability.

One must also highlight the heightened Albanian rhetoric. Statements have not gone unnoticed in terms of the intention of Pristina to give patronage to ethnic Albanians regardless of their country of residence. That constitutes a direct step towards the destabilization not only of Kosovo, but of Serbia's neighbours, including the

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece.

The stabilization of the situation in Kosovo remains far off. Problems in the province can be solved only through political means. We anticipate that all international presences will fully adhere to that common position within the framework of efforts to implement the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6940

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6940th meeting
Monday, 25 March 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Afande
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

13-26886 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Serry.

Mr. Serry: As the peoples of the Middle East face a period of extraordinary challenges and turmoil, establishing the groundwork necessary for a credible Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains a core priority for the United Nations. President Obama's visit to the region last week marked an important opportunity to reinvigorate efforts towards a two-State solution. President Obama met with leaders on both sides. He also visited His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan, who has been central to recent dialogue initiatives. In a direct follow-up to the visit, the United States Secretary of State Mr. John Kerry met with President Abbas in Amman and returned to Jerusalem to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The United Nations welcomes the continued commitment of the United States to the peace process, and we appreciate President Obama's strong reaffirmation of a two-State solution as necessary, just and possible in his speech of 21 March, in which he called for an independent and viable Palestine while emphasizing Israelis' right to insist on safeguarding their security. The United States President also recalled that he had previously proposed principles on the issues of territory and security that he believes can be the basis for talks, and called on Arab States to take steps towards normalized relations with Israel. On 22 March, regarding an important related development and a hopeful signal for the stability of the region, the Secretary-General welcomed the news that the Governments of Israel and Turkey had agreed to restore normal relations between each other and expressed his appreciation for President Obama's role in reaching that positive outcome.

On 18 March, a new Israeli Government was confirmed by the Knesset. In his congratulatory letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Secretary-General stated that he counted on the Prime Minister's commitment to the two-State solution, and he expressed the view that it will be critical this year to achieve substantial results that would strengthen Israel's security, as well as its regional and international standing, and fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State.

Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas reiterated their commitment to the two-State solution as essentially the only prospect for the future of Israelis and Palestinians, while they undeniably differ on its terms and on how to attain it. It is incumbent upon us, as the United Nations, and the international community, to help them bridge those differences. Much work lies ahead. We should not underestimate the difficulties, but neither should we belittle the real possibility of overcoming them. It is now time for all of us to come together in concerted action and support a serious international initiative, including through a revitalized Quartet that engages more broadly with key Arab partners and regional and other stakeholders.

Efforts currently under way offer the chance for a new beginning and a renewed push for serious political progress. Therein lies opportunity, but we worry that it will not last if the volatile situation on the ground is not urgently addressed at the same time. Both parties should undertake constructive steps and work to reverse negative trends. In that context, we note that there were no new settlement announcements during the reporting period, and that three structures in settlement outposts were demolished on 18 March. The period also registered fewer incursions by Israeli security forces in the West Bank, including in Area A, as well as a decrease in demolitions of Palestinian structures.

The United Nations position is clear and firm on all the aforementioned issues. It is now our hope that those initial signals that the negative measures on the ground are being reversed will take hold and create a conducive environment for a meaningful political process to take shape.

Overall, it must be said that the levels of violence remained high. Several clashes took place during

protests, including in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners, which caused the death of one Palestinian. The use of rubber-coated bullets by Israeli security forces continues to result in a high number of Palestinian injuries, including those of a 23-year-old man who recently died from wounds suffered when hit on his head by a rubber-coated bullet on 22 February. A third Palestinian died on 15 March after an Israel security forces gas canister had earlier entered his taxi in East Jerusalem. Thirteen Israeli soldiers were also injured.

Tensions also extended to Jerusalem, with multiple clashes taking place at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound, including on 3 and 6 March, and again on 8 March when dozens of Israeli police officers entered the compound and fired stun grenades at Palestinians throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails. The Secretary-General stresses the importance for protests to remain strictly non-violent and for the right to peaceful protest to be fully respected.

Settler violence against Palestinians continued, injuring six. On 12 March, a Palestinian man died of his injuries after he had been run over by a settler vehicle near Salfit on 9 March. Settler attacks on Palestinian orchards resulted in damage to over 590 trees, while stone throwing at Palestinian vehicles in the West Bank resulted in material damage. Israeli security forces arrested a total of nine settlers suspected of assaulting Palestinians in the West Bank.

Israeli security sources have also reported an increase in stone throwing, including against settlers, that injured a total of 10 during the reporting period. Palestinian attacks on settlers included a suspected shooting on 18 March that resulted in injuries to one settler. A suspect in that shooting was arrested by Palestinian security forces on 20 March. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles in the West Bank reportedly resulted in a road accident on 14 March that injured six settlers, including a three-year-old, critically. Similar attacks on 6, 11 and 15 March resulted in slight injuries to six Israelis.

We remain concerned about the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody, which we understand was the subject of discussion during this week's high-level meetings. One long-term hunger striker agreed to stop his strike in exchange for being released and deported to Gaza by Israeli authorities on 17 March. Five other prisoners remain on hunger strike, one of whom is reportedly in grave, life-threatening condition. Activities in their support continued in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including a demonstration in front of United Nations offices in Ramallah on 16 March, during which a letter was delivered by the families of prisoners and transmitted to the Secretary-General. The United Nations reiterates that those held in administrative detention without charge should be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees, in accordance with international standards, or be promptly released. We also recall the importance of full adherence by all sides to the 14 May 2012 agreement.

Palestinian security forces have continued working to maintain law and order in the West Bank, in coordination with Israeli security forces and supported by training and equipment from international partners.

I have just come from Brussels, where the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) met on 19 March. Two years after the donors — based on reports from the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — gave their positive assessment of the State readiness of the Palestinian Authority regarding the institutions studied, I highlighted again in my report to the AHLC on behalf of the United Nations the growing disconnect between the widely recognized success of the Palestinian State-building agenda and the continued impasse in the political process. I expressed my concern that State-building achievements could be eroded, given the deteriorating reality on the ground, negative socioeconomic and security trends, and the dire fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority. Those concerns were widely shared by participants in the meeting.

The AHLC underscored the importance for Israel to transfer Palestinian clearance revenues to the Palestinian Authority in a timely, transparent and predictable manner, that the Palestinian Authority continue with structural reforms, including fiscal containment, and that donors provide adequate and predictable assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The general feeling at the AHLC meeting was that it is an illusion that we can preserve the current situation indefinitely. The alternative to progress is sliding back, and a political horizon must be restored without delay.

With regard to other developments during the reporting period, as the Council is aware, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly his report on the status of Palestine (A/67/738), which reviewed

progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012.

I would also like to highlight the activities of Palestinian women's and human rights organizations in the West Bank and in Gaza to mark International Women's Day on 8 March. Numerous events called attention to the situation of Palestinian women and their demands, including an end of the occupation and the full realization of Palestinian statehood. Unfortunately, it was also in this reporting period that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had to cancel the annual Gaza marathon because the de facto authorities would not permit the participation of women.

In Gaza, the reporting period saw a serious setback in the implementation of the ceasefire brokered on 21 November. On 21 March, rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel for the second time since the ceasefire. In reaction, Israel rescinded the extension of the fishing limit, bringing it back to three nautical miles, and restricted travel by Palestinians into and out of Gaza. It also closed the Kerem Shalom crossing, bringing the movement of goods to and from Gaza to a halt for the second time after the closure from 27 February to 3 March, following the previous rocket fired.

The United Nations condemned the firing, in line with our consistent position that rocket fire into civilian areas is completely unacceptable. We also urged Israel's continued restraint. It must be very clear to the parties to the understanding reached on 21 November that full adherence to its terms is required by all if work is to continue to solidify the calm, prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza, advance the lifting of the closure and have a chance to fully implement resolution 1860 (2009). The United Nations will continue to support Egypt's important efforts to restore and solidify the calm.

Israeli forces conducted five incursions into Gaza, and a total of six Palestinian civilians were injured by Israeli fire, mostly while attempting to approach the border fence.

There was no progress on Palestinian reconciliation efforts during the reporting period and no meetings between the sides. The Palestinian Central Elections Commission has announced that the updated voter register, including electors from Gaza, will be available on 10 April in spite of Israeli authorities not having authorized the transfer of registration forms from Gaza to Ramallah.

The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to worsen since the Council was briefed by Under-Secretary-General Feltman last month (see S/PV.6926) and by Under-Secretary-General Amos, High Commissioner Guterres and Special Representative Bangura. The continuing pursuit of a military victory by both sides, and their reckless disregard for civilian lives and their protection are of deep concern to the United Nations. Impunity is widespread; human suffering and destruction are pervasive.

As the Secretary-General has said repeatedly, the prospects for a political solution in the Syria will remain slim unless the parties abandon violence and instead commit to a political solution. Limited signals by the parties towards the possible start of a dialogue have so far not materialized. The opposition coalition has elected an interim Prime Minister and will participate in the upcoming summit of the League of Arab States in Doha.

A consensus position of the international community and a common position on the part of the Security Council are critical to a political settlement. Joint Special Representative Brahimi is working tirelessly to achieve that objective. He is counting on the Council's united and meaningful support to his efforts.

In the meantime, the United Nations is doing its utmost to respond to the tragic humanitarian consequences of the conflict, which continue to grow dramatically by the day. Nearly 1.2 million refugees from Syria are seeking safety in neighbouring countries. We are grateful for the generous hospitality shown towards these refugees by regional Governments, which face an increasingly heavy burden on their own economies.

Funding for our humanitarian efforts remains a challenge. Regrettably, only about 20 per cent of what was pledged during the Kuwait pledging conference on 30 January has been received thus far. We continue to appeal for those pledges to be translated into real commitments as soon as possible.

Last week, the Secretary-General announced his decision to conduct an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. He acted on the request of the Syrian Government, which was soon followed

by requests from the Governments of France and the United Kingdom. He believes that all allegations should be taken seriously. The Secretary-General responded promptly to the Governments concerned, formally informing them of his decision and seeking additional information pertaining to the incidents reported to facilitate the investigation. He also sent a letter to the President of the Security Council. He has been in close contact with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Health Organization. Both organizations have assured the Secretary-General of their full support. The terms of reference for the mission will soon be finalized.

The deteriorating situation in Syria has also affected significantly the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) area of operation, with clashes between Government and opposition forces intensifying in recent days. The continued military activities in the area of separation have the potential to escalate the situation between Israel and the Syria and jeopardize the ceasefire between the two countries. There was a worrisome incident yesterday in that regard, as heavy machine gunfire from the Bravo side, which reached across the ceasefire line, was answered by the firing of an Israel Defense Forces missile into the area of limitation. UNDOF is still ascertaining the facts with both sides. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations will brief the Council in detail tomorrow on the situation in the Golan, including that most recent incident.

In Lebanon, the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati on 22 March has cast further uncertainty over the political process at a time of increased tensions across the country, most notably in Tripoli. The Secretary-General has called on all the parties in Lebanon to remain united behind the leadership of President Sleiman; to work together with the institutions of the State to maintain calm and stability; to respect Lebanon's policy of disassociation, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration; and to support the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces in sustaining national unity, sovereignty and security.

Let me recall that only 10 days ago, following the briefing by the Special Coordinator of the Secretary-General for Lebanon on 14 March, the Council clearly recognized the fragility of the situation in Lebanon, expressing deep concern at the impact of the Syrian crisis on the country's stability. Since then, there have been more security concerns.

First, on 17 March, four Sunni religious scholars were assaulted in Beirut. The attacks were widely condemned, and the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed to contain ensuing tensions. In the northern city of Tripoli, the Lebanese army deployed in force to contain renewed clashes since 20 March, which had left nine persons, including a Lebanese soldier, dead as of yesterday.

Secondly, on 18 March, Syrian helicopters were reported to have entered Lebanese airspace and fired rockets at two locations close to the north-eastern border town of Aarsal. There were no casualties. The Secretary-General expressed grave concern at the reported strikes, which President Sleiman condemned as an unacceptable violation of Lebanese sovereignty. The Syrian Government has denied the incident. On 21 March, there was a new report of a further rocket that was fired by a Syrian helicopter and landed in the same area. Also on 20 March, there were reports of Syrian shells landing on the outskirts of Al-Qasr in Lebanon's north-eastern region of Hermel.

Meanwhile, the situation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area of operations and along the Blue Line remained generally stable, but Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continued at a high level. The total strength of the Lebanese army presence in UNIFIL's area of operation is now at approximately two brigades, following new redeployments out of the area to address security challenges elsewhere.

In that context, consultations on a new Government are expected to begin this week. The Secretary-General urges all concerned to engage positively with the President to agree on the way forward through dialogue, in accordance with Lebanon's constitutional requirements and in full respect for the democratic process. As called for by the Council, it remains important for Lebanon's continued stability that all parties make swift progress to ensure that parliamentary elections take place on a consensual basis within the legal and constitutional framework.

Allow me to conclude. We now have an opening to develop a serious and substantial political initiative to achieve the negotiated two-State solution that we all hope for and that will best serve the interests, rights and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians alike. The months ahead will not be easy. Both sides will now have to demonstrate political will and determination to make

progress, and the concerted action of the international community, including the region, will be needed to support their efforts. The United Nations is committed to playing its role in shaping the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations in the period ahead.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Serry for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.